

President's East/ West Speech, 1977

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memo	NJ to ZB (16 pp.) OPENED 9/25/01	ca. 7/77	A

FILE LOCATION

Chief of Staff (Jordan)/Box 6 of 8 (org.)/President's East/West Speech 1977

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CONFIDENTIAL

TO: ZBIG
FROM: HAMILTON JORDAN
RE: YOUR REQUEST FOR MY COMMENTS ON THE EAST-WEST SPEECH

It would seem to me that our principle objective in this speech should be a positive explanation and reaffirmation of our foreign policy objectives vis-a-vis the Soviet Union. I think that it is critical that to the extent the Soviets are "comforted" by this speech, it should be a result of their having a clearer understanding of our policies and not a result of their thinking that we have reacted to their harsh rhetoric by moderating our policy.

If the ~~Soviets~~ ^{SOVIETS} and the American people perceive this speech as a public acknowledgement that our policies

5/15/61 NSC: NLC-01-28
J 5/30/61

have been "too extreme" or "naive", then we will have undermined considerably the image of Jimmy Carter as a man who is strong and sure of himself in dealing with the Soviets. From what little I know about it, a similar reading by the Soviets will in the long run have a bad effect as they will be inclined to attack us vigorously based on their earlier experience with Carter.

Without being specific, my only concern about this speech is that the tone of it is slightly apologetic in places. It should be stronger in the statement of our policy and beliefs. I would like to see less copy focused on what has happened in the past. This seems to me to be a bit defensive.

It is a very good speech, but with minor modifications could deal with the objections I have raised if they are - in fact - valid.

7/19/77
6:45 p.m.

I am proud to meet with you today, here in one of the most gracious of our nation's cities, to talk about the problems and the hopes that we, as Southerners and as Americans, all share.

I feel a special kinship with you as state legislators. For four years I was a member of the Georgia State Senate, and I still prize state government not only for the talents of those who work in it, but for its closeness to the people it represents. Our Southern states have a proud tradition of local, independent government, of which you are now the heirs.

But we in the South have also felt, more directly than anyone else in our nation, one of the changes of the modern age. More and more our daily lives are shaped by events in other cities, decisions in other states, tensions in other parts of the world. As Americans, we cannot overlook the way our fate is bound to that of other nations. This interdependence stretches from the health of our economy to the security of our energy supplies. It is a new world, in which we cannot afford to be narrow in our vision, limited in our foresight, or selfish in our purpose.

When I took office, our nation was facing a series of challenges around the world -- in Southern Africa, the Middle East, in our relations with our NATO allies, and on such

tough questions as nuclear proliferation, the Panama Canal, and world poverty. We have addressed difficult and controversial issues -- some of which have been delayed or avoided in the past. As I pointed out in my most recent press conference, a period of debate, disagreement and probing was inevitable -- especially since, in all our foreign relations, our goal is not to reach quick or easy agreements, but to find solutions that are balanced and mean something for the future as well as for the present.

Today I want to discuss perhaps the most important of these foreign relations, the one that will most directly shape the chances for peace for us and for our children. That is our relationship with the Soviet Union.

For decades, the central problems of our foreign policy revolved around antagonism between two coalitions, one headed by the United States and the other by the Soviet Union. Our national security was defined almost exclusively in terms of competition with the USSR.

This competition is still critical, because it does involve issues of war and peace. But it should not dominate our policy, to the exclusion of other world issues. Even if we succeed in relaxing tensions with the USSR, we could still awake one day to find that nuclear weapons have spread to dozens of other nations. Or we could struggle to limit the arsenals of our two nations, in the name of reducing

the danger of war, only to undo our efforts by continuing to export armaments without restraint. As two industrial giants, both of us face long-term energy crises. Whatever our political differences, both of us are compelled to begin conserving our energy supplies and developing alternatives. Despite deep and continuing differences in world outlook, both of us should accept the new responsibilities imposed on us by the changing nature of international relations.

Other great changes have transformed the nature of the international drama. Europe and Japan rose from the rubble of war to become great economic powers. Communist parties and nations became more widespread and more varied. Newly independent nations emerged into what has become known as the Third World. And the technological genius of mankind gave us not only the means of bringing the world's peoples closer together, but also ever more sophisticated and prolific weapons of destruction.

Both the United States and the Soviet Union have learned that our country and our people, in spite of our great resources and our political tradition, are not omnipotent. We have learned that this world, no matter how technology has shrunk its distances, is still too large and too varied to come under the sway of two dominating super powers, let alone of one. And -- what is perhaps most

important -- we have, for our part, learned all of this in a spirit not of increasing resignation but of increasing maturity.

I mention these familiar changes because I think that to understand today's Soviet-American relationship we must place it in perspective, both historically and in terms of the overall global scene.

The whole history of Soviet-American relations teaches us that we will be misled if we base our long-range assessments on the mood of the moment, whether that mood is euphoric or grim. All of us can remember times when relations seemed especially dangerous and times when they seemed bright. We have crossed those peaks and valleys before. And we can see that, on balance, the trend in the last third of a century has been positive.

The profound differences in what our two governments believe about freedom and power and the inner lives of human beings -- differences that are rooted in the histories and values of each of our societies -- will remain, and so will the element of the competition between the United States and the Soviet Union. But the mutual interests that our two countries share are every bit as real. Our job is to explore those interests and use them to enlarge the areas of cooperation between us, as a basis of equality and respect.

That competition is real, and deeply rooted in history, philosophy, and even psychology

As we negotiate with the Soviet Union, we will be guided by a vision -- of a gentler, freer, more bountiful world -- but we will have no illusions about the nature of the world as it really is. The agreements we reach must be anchored on each side in self-interest. Trust may grow out of that process, but trust cannot initiate it. That is why we search for areas where our real interests and the real interests of the Soviets coincide.

We want to engage the Soviets in the growing pattern of international activities designed to deal with common human problems -- not only because they can be of real help, but also because we want them to have a stake in the creation of a constructive world order.

When I took office -- exactly six months ago yesterday -- many Americans were growing disillusioned with detente -- and, by, extension, with the whole course of our relations with the Soviet Union. At the same time, we were regaining our sense of confidence as a nation.

In this situation, I felt it was right for me to talk honestly about international issues with the American people. I felt that it was urgent to restore the moral bearings of American foreign policy. And I felt that it was important to put the U.S.-Soviet relationship, in particular, on a more reciprocal, realistic, and ultimately more productive basis. This is what I have sought to do.

We have already taken the initiative in putting forth bold, sometimes unprecedented proposals in many areas of Soviet-American relations:

-- In the talks on strategic arms limitations, we advanced a comprehensive proposal for genuine reductions, limitations, and a freeze on new technology.

-- We have come out for a complete end to all nuclear tests, without political conditions, and negotiations to this end are now underway. Agreement here could be a major milestone in U.S.-Soviet relations.

-- We have proposed a ban on chemical warfare and the elimination of all stocks;

-- We have proposed to curb the sales and transfer of arms;

-- We have proposed to halt the proliferation of nuclear weapons;

-- We have proposed arms restraint in the Indian Ocean.

-- We have discussed Soviet adherence to the Treaty of Tlatelolco, which would ban the introduction of nuclear weapons into the Western Hemisphere.

-- In the Middle East we are continuing to consult with Soviet leaders.

-- In southern Africa we have counseled Soviet restraint. Throughout the non-aligned world, our goal is not to redive

the world into two opposing ideological camps, but to expand the realm of independent, economically self-sufficient nations -- and to oppose attempts at subjugation.

-- We would welcome Soviet help in resolving the disputes between North and South.

-- We and our allies are working together, with the Soviets, to reduce the level of armaments in Europe.

-- We have renewed the 1972 agreement for cooperation in science and technology and a similar agreement for cooperation in outer space.

-- Increased trade between the United States and the Soviet Union would help us both. I hope we can work together to create the conditions for expanded trade. The American-Soviet Joint Commercial Commission has resumed its meeting after a long interlude.

-- We should also find ways to cooperate in improving world health and in relieving world hunger.

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In the Strategic Arms Limitation Talks we need to make steady progress toward our long-term goals of genuine reductions and strict limitations. We have outlined proposals incorporating significant elements of arms control: deep reductions in the arsenals of both sides, freezing of deployments and technology, and restraining certain elements in the strategic posture of both sides that threaten to destabilize the balance.

The Vladivostok negotiations of 1972 left some issues unresolved and subject to honest differences of interpretation. Meanwhile, new developments in technology have created new concerns. The Soviets are worried about our cruise missiles. We are concerned about their very large ballistic missiles which are being equipped with multiple warheads. We understand their interests. We want them to understand ours. We will continue to work for an agreement, built on Vladivostok, that cleans up the unresolved issues and copes with the new technology.

Our proposals are different from those that any Administration has made before. We are trying, for the first time, to reduce the existing number of nuclear weapons. We are trying, for the first time, to bring about a complete end to all nuclear tests, without political conditions, and negotiations to this end are under way. We are trying, for the first time, to reach agreements that will not be overturned by the next technological breakthrough. We are trying, in a word, for lasting peace.

Not one of these proposals involves a sacrifice of our security. All of them are meant to increase the security of both sides. Our view is that a SALT agreement cannot just reflect the lowest common denominator that can be agreed upon. This will create only an illusion of progress and, eventually, a backlash against the entire arms control process. Our view is that genuine progress in SALT will not merely stabilize competition in weapons, but provide a basis for a change in political relations.

When I say that these efforts are intended to relax tensions, I am not speaking only in the abstract diplomatic language of military security. I mean as well the individual human tension that comes from the knowledge that the leaders of our two countries have the capacity to destroy human society through misunderstanding or mistakes. If we can relax this tension, not only will we make the world a safer place, but also we will free ourselves to concentrate on the things we should be doing.

We have made some progress toward our goals. But, to be frank, we have also heard some negative comments from the Soviet side about SALT and about our relations more generally. If these comments are based on a misconception of our motives, we will do our utmost to make them clear; but if they are merely designed to put pressure on us as part of the negotiating process, we will persevere.

What matters in the long run is whether we can create a relationship of restraint and cooperation that will be rooted in the national interests of both sides. We are adjusting our own policies to accommodate the changing world, and we hope the Soviets will do the same. Together we can give this change a constructive direction.

We must recognize that part of the Soviet leaders' current attitude may be due to their apparent -- and incorrect -- belief that our concern for human rights is aimed specifically at them.

There are no hidden meanings in our stand on human rights. It is exactly what it appears to be: the positive and sincere expression of our deepest beliefs as a people. It is addressed not to any particular country or group of countries, but to all countries equally, including our own. And it is specifically not intended to heat up the arms race, bring back the Cold War, or try to dictate to any country, including the USSR.

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On the contrary, I believe that an atmosphere of peaceful cooperation is far more conducive to the gradual growth of human rights than an atmosphere of belligerence or warlike confrontation. The experience of our country has proved this over and over again.

Our belief in human rights springs from the same source, the same vision of a better world, as do our beliefs in arms control and in international cooperation. Our ultimate aim, in each instance, is to raise the general level of human conduct, and to reduce the role that raw, brutal force plays in human affairs.

And just as our stand on human rights is not aimed at any particular country, neither is a public commitment to human rights the exclusive property of any particular country, including the United States. Such rights as the right to be protected from torture and arbitrary imprisonment and the right to speak as conscience directs are firmly rooted in international commitments. In Article VII of the Helsinki accords, for example, the participating countries pledge to "respect human rights and fundamental freedoms, including the freedom of thought, conscience, religion or belief, for all without distinction as to race, sex, language or religion." We in the United States are willing to be judged by that standard.

We have no illusions that the process will be quick or that change will come easily. But we are confident that, in the course of months and years, the cause of human dignity will prevail.

In my first six months in office, my Administration has gone beyond our predecessors -- both in our willingness to give voice to Americans' fundamental beliefs, and in our determination to obtain lasting solutions to East-West differences. If this chance to emphasize cooperation instead of competition is allowed to pass, it will not have been our choice.

I can summarize the themes that will underlie our relations with the Soviet Union this way:

First, our policy must be based on the knowledge that our relationship with the Soviet Union is a complex one that will continue to involve both competitive concerns and ^{cooperative} ~~common~~ interests. We can afford no illusions on this point.

Second, in the period immediately ahead, our most important objective must be to manage this relationship so as to reduce the danger that it might lead to nuclear war. We must do this by stabilizing the strategic military competition through negotiation and by regulating the political competition in crisis areas of the world.

Third, in the longer run, our aim is to encourage the Soviet Union to participate with us in constructive efforts to deal with the urgent problems that affect life on this planet.

Fourth, in each step we take with the Soviet Union, we must seek specific actions based upon mutual self-interest. We must not allow rhetorical abstractions and passing moods to deflect us.

Finally, at every point, we must combine realism with principle. Our actions must be faithful to the essential values to which our society is dedicated, because our faith in these values is the source of our confidence that this relationship will evolve in a more constructive direction.

I cannot forecast whether all our efforts will succeed. But there are things which give me hope, and in conclusion I would like to mention them briefly.

This place where I now stand is one of the oldest cities in the United States. It is a beautiful town, of whose culture and urban charm all Americans are proud -- just as the peoples of the Soviet Union are justly proud of such ancient cities as Tbilisi or Novgorod which they lovingly preserve, and in which they infuse a new life that makes these cities far more than the dead remnants of a glorious past. Although there are deep differences in our values and ideas, we Americans and Russians belong to the same civilization whose origins stretch back hundreds of years.

Beyond all the disagreements between us -- and beyond the cool calculations of mutual self-interest that our two countries bring to the negotiating table -- is the invisible human reality that must bring us closer together. I mean the yearning for peace, real peace, that is in the very bones of us all. I am absolutely certain that the people of the Soviet Union, who have suffered so grievously in war, feel this yearning. And in this they are at one with the people of the United States.

It is up to all of us to help make that unspoken passion into something more than a dream -- and that responsibility falls most heavily on those, like President Brezhnev and myself, who hold in their hands the terrible power conferred by modern engines of war.

Mr. Brezhnev said something very interesting recently. "It is our belief, our firm belief," he said, "that realism in politics and the will for detente and progress will ultimately triumph and mankind will be able to step into the 21st century in conditions of peace stable as never before." I see no hidden meanings in that. I credit its sincerity. And I share the hope and belief it expresses. With all the difficulties, all the conflicts, I believe that our planet must finally obey the Biblical injunction to "follow after the things which make peace."

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