

NSC Never Thought Soviets Would Accept Proposals

The following is the transcript of an interview with an aide to Zbigniew Brzezinski, Pres. Carter's National Security Advisor.

Q: I understand that Mr. Brzezinski said today that part of the SALT proposal was a curb on technological development of new weapons systems. Is that true?

A: Yes. The U.S. is seeking agreement of parity with the Soviets: that neither side have an advantage over the other. The first proposal we offered is moving to a disarmament agreement that puts a freeze on levels, and then puts limits not only on systems, but on technological dynamics. The Salt agreement had both aspects. The U.S. believes this proposal leads to a more stable relationship between the U.S. and USSR. There was a whole package — civil defense, the Indian Ocean, etc.

Q: Do you mean that SALT was part of an entire take it or leave it package?

A: The agreement we want to have, is to agree to different kinds of agreements. The Salt agreement has two aspects — the number of weapons, and a halt, a taking account of the qualitative changes in weapons such as the modernization of ICBM's.

Q: Do you really think the Soviets would go along with limiting their technological advances; that they would capitulate to such demands?

A: Well the proposals are very complicated, you have to look at all the dimensions. You really have to get into the specifics of the package. There is flexibility, it is negotiable. What is going on now went on in the 60's with the ICBM issue. The Soviets refused to ban it, then realized that the ICBM's were destabilizing. Now we are in the early part of the education process.

Q: Chancellor Schmidt has endorsed the Mutual Balanced Force Reduction proposal of Herbert Wehner and told Vance that West Germany would not abrogate its nuclear deal with Brazil and would not reflate their economy. He was really slapping Carter and Carter's policy.

A: I have no reaction on that. I have not been briefed on how to respond on that.

Q: Then you are aware of it?

A: Yes.

Q: Aren't the Europeans rejecting Carter's policy. I have spoken to a number of Congressmen and have found that they reject it too.

A: That's your interpretation. The President met with the Congressional leaders and they said they support him.

Q: Congressman Rhodes did not. He made a speech last night attacking Carter's foreign policy approach.

A: Well Carter said at the press briefing on March 30 that he had unanimous agreement with the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the Secretary of State, the Secretary of Defense in support of his negotiating position. My interpretation is that he has a great deal of support, you have been around gathering material on this and its obvious it is not yours.

Q: What do you have to say about Mr. Gromyko's statements — he answered very clearly that the Soviets were no longer going along with their deal of scrapping technology to get a SALT agreement. It is clear that the Soviets are not going to back down.

A: Dr. Brzezinski addressed that in a press meeting. The general U.S. position and reaction is that the atmosphere at the talks is not unreceptive. The Soviets will consider the proposals between now and May. While they were not acceptable, we never thought they would be.

Q: You made proposals you knew would be rejected?

A: Well we did not think it would be accepted right out of hand, immediately, and Brezhnev is leaving the door open for talks.

Q: What you are doing is leaving the Soviets two options — they will not back down, that is clear. They will either go with a programmatic organizing, organize Europe and the Third World into a new monetary system using the T-ruble or they would go with early thermonuclear war. Brzezinski is playing games with nuclear war.

A: That is your interpretation. Brzezinski is not making policy. This is the White House.

Q: Yes, it is not just Brzezinski it is the entire Trilateral Commission which is making the policy.

A: That's not true, that's not true. I have to go.