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Remarks

Executive Secretary
14 Nov 85

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REMARKS BY PRESIDENT RICHARD NIXON
BEFORE THE MID-AMERICA COMMITTEE,
CHICAGO, ILLINOIS -- OCTOBER 29, 1985

The foreign policy issue which dominates discussion today is the relationship between the two superpowers and the upcoming summit meeting between President Reagan and General Secretary Gorbachev. Before discussing that issue, I believe it would be useful to step back and put East/West relations in historical perspective.

Thirty-two years ago I took my first trip around the world. In 70 days, Mrs. Nixon and I visited all of the countries in Asia with which the United States had diplomatic relations. Four weeks ago I completed another trip around the world in which I went to several of the countries I have visited in 1953. But I was unable to visit Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos, Afghanistan, and Iran, all of which I had visited in 1953. On the plus side, however, I spent a week in the People's Republic of China with which the United States had no diplomatic relations in 1953.

Thirty-two years ago, every leader of the countries I visited feared the military power of the communist Chinese who had just fought the United States to a standstill in Korea. In most of these countries, the PRC was supporting communist revolutionaries against the established governments.



Today, China has good relations with all of its neighbors in Southeast Asia except for Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos and Afghanistan which have come under Soviet domination.

There has been another change on the negative side of the ledger. Thirty-two years ago, the United States had unquestioned nuclear superiority over the Soviet Union. Until the mid-70s, that superiority was the major factor in preventing World War III and deterring Soviet aggression, particularly in the Mideast in 1957 and 1973, in Berlin in 1959, and in the Caribbean in 1961.

Today we no longer have that superiority. This is not to say that we are a helpless giant. We are ahead in submarine and air-launch missiles. But the Soviet Union has acquired decisive superiority in strategic land-based missiles, the most powerful and accurate nuclear weapons. With their 300 SS-18s which carry 3,000 warheads, they can take out all of the U.S. land-based missile force and have enough left over to take out our major cities. This amounts to a first strike capability. This does not mean that they are going to launch a nuclear war. While they are dedicated to the goal of expanding communist domination in the world, they are not fools. They know that they would suffer enormous retaliation and a nuclearized Europe and United States is not an

attractive prize of victory. The danger the United States and the West face is not nuclear war but nuclear blackmail. President Reagan's MX program, his SDI program, and his arms control initiatives have the purpose of reducing that danger.

Let us now examine another change on the positive side. Thirty-two years ago, many non-communists in countries I visited -- teachers, labor leaders, members of the media -- honestly wondered whether the communist systems of the PRC and the Soviet Union might be better models for progress for newly independent countries than those offered by the Western democracies.

That is no longer the case. Why? Sixty-five years ago a starry-eyed American reporter came back from the Soviet Union and wrote, "I have been over into the future and it works." Now we have seen that future and it doesn't work. It doesn't work in Eastern Europe, it doesn't work in the Third World -- Cuba, Nicaragua, Angola, Mozambique, Vietnam, and Ethiopia are economic disaster areas. Most significantly, it does not work in the Soviet Union. That is why Gorbachev's primary goal is to get the Soviet economy moving again.

The only economic success stories since the end of World War II are in non-communist nations which have turned to the market rather than to government for progress. We have heard a lot about the Japanese and the German miracles, our two major enemies in

World War II now are our two major competitors. But there are other miracles in the making, particularly on the rimland of Asia. Korea, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Singapore, Malaysia, and Thailand are poised for economic takeoffs.

The most striking example of change is in the PRC. When I visited Beijing in 1972, 1976, and 1979, the Chinese leaders attacked the Soviet Union as "capitalist roaders" where athletes, actors, and politicians became millionaires. In 1979, Deng Xiaoping began a dramatic program of reform. Until 1979, the effect of the PRC's policy was to give every Chinese an equal share in poverty. Today, they are giving some a chance to earn their way out of poverty. Deng recognizes that his choice is between equality at the price of poverty or progress at the price of inequality. As he compares the plight of his desperately poor country with what Chinese have accomplished in Singapore, Taiwan, and Hong Kong, he has made the choice of choosing progress with some inequality over rigid equality and no progress.

The most striking success story is in agriculture. With their new incentive system, Chinese farmers produce enough to feed the one billion people of the PRC and are exporting food abroad. Russian peasants still working in communist communes are unable to produce enough to feed the 250 million people of the Soviet Union and the government has to import food from abroad.

One of the more obvious examples of change is in women's clothes. When I met with Mao and Chou En-lai in 1972, the young women who translated for us were dressed in baggy gray Mao suits and had severe short haircuts. The Chinese communists had taken too seriously the admonition of Professor Higgins, "Why can't a woman be like a man?"

When I visited Canton this year, we were served by beautiful Chinese girls wearing high heels and multi-colored stylish gowns. My host observed, "You will note that we have more color in our clothes today. The same is true of our ideology." This is, of course, somewhat of an overstatement. It is a mistake for naive visitors from the United States to gush that the Chinese have become capitalists. The Chinese leaders are dedicated communists but they are also Chinese. They use capitalist tools to achieve communist goals. For them, as an editorial in Ebony magazine pointed out in another context, the color of freedom is not red, white, and blue but green.

Some caveats must be borne in mind: as Chairman Deng tries to expand his reforms into special economic zones in urban areas, he has run into problems which inevitably plague free economies -- corruption, inflation, and shortages. The danger that faces the PRC today is not in turning back to doctrinaire Marxism but in going forward too fast. Deng recognizes this danger and is shrewdly

developing policies to deal with it.

Whether the policy of reforms will be continued in the future depends in great part on the leadership of one of the world's most remarkable leaders, the 81 year old Deng Xiaoping. He is in excellent health today; he looks better than he did when I saw him in 1982 and 1979. But he is aware of his mortality. He is preparing younger men to take over when he leaves the scene. Unlike other strong leaders -- Churchill, Adenauer, and deGaulle come to mind -- but like Yoshida of Japan he does not put down his potential successors. He tries to build them up. The question is which one will be strong enough to provide the leadership China will need in the future. History tells us that collective leadership doesn't work -- not even in a small country like Uruguay. It can't possibly work in providing leadership for one billion Chinese.

The least likely danger to the reform movement is the one most talked about -- that the Chinese may turn back to the Soviet Union in their search for economic progress. The Soviet model simply doesn't work. As one Chinese leader put it to me, with understandable overstatement, unless the Soviets open up to the West and reform their economy as China is attempting to do, the Soviet Union in the next century will "disappear" as a great nation.

With these considerations in mind, it is vitally important to recognize that more important than our

military relationship are the economic ties which China has with the United States, Japan, and Europe. If we can give them an economic stake in good relations with the West, they will not turn back to their big neighbors from the north.

Let us now turn to the Soviet Union. I do not know Mikhail Gorbachev but I knew those like Suslov who sponsored and educated him and on this trip I talked to several who do know him from China, Pakistan, and England. We Americans, and this is particularly so in the media, tend to allow style to blind ourselves to substance. For example, in 1955 when Khrushchev succeeded Stalin I recall the briefing a Soviet expert gave to the National Security Council. He predicted that Khrushchev would not be an effective leader because he was poorly educated, wore ill-fitting clothes, drank too much and spoke poor Russian. Foster Dulles disagreed. He said, "Mr. President, anyone who claws his way to the top in the communist system is bound to be a strong man and a dangerous adversary." He proved to be right.

Today, we are deluged with reports about Gorbachev's style. He has a good education. He is well-dressed. He has a good sense of humor. He has excellent eye contact, a firm handshake, and a melodious voice; his wife wears designer clothes. This is all very interesting but it does not indicate that he may prove to be more reasonable.

On the contrary, he will be more formidable than his predecessors. That is the opinion of all of the leaders I met on my recent trip. As one of them put it: "Gorbachev is a thoroughbred communist; he is a product of the system; he will try to improve the system but he will not change it; he will continue to pursue traditional Soviet foreign policy goals."

This is what we can expect:

He will not engage in any rash new foreign policy adventures. He has enough on his plate to digest already.

He will be tough in keeping what he has; he can't risk losing any part of the Soviet empire he has inherited.

He will try to romance the Chinese -- without success -- as long as China has an economic stake in good relations with the West.

He will try to drive a wedge between Europe and the United States.

He will try to reduce tensions with the United States. Why? Because his primary concern is not fear of war but the need to get the Soviet economy moving again. Because the Soviet economy is only one-half of the size of ours, he has to spend twice as much on defense to stay even with the United States. His opposition to the Star Wars program is

not primarily because he fears the United States might gain a military advantage but because of the enormous burden such a program would impose on the strapped Soviet economy. He needs the trade and technology from the West which would come if he could reduce tensions with the United States.

Getting the Soviet economy moving again is his first priority, in part because this would benefit the Soviet people but primarily because without a stronger economy he cannot have a strong foreign policy. The Soviet system is no longer a model for Third World countries where the future of the world will be determined in the twenty-first century. This means that while he can still project his military power in the target areas, he cannot project his ideas.

Let us turn to President Reagan's priorities. The primary objective of his foreign policy is to reduce the danger of war. His critics contend that if this is the case he should join Gorbachev in making arms control the major subject for negotiation at Geneva. The President sincerely wants arms control but he recognizes that the only purpose of arms control is to reduce the danger of war and that it is not the existence of arms but the failure to resolve political differences which lead to their use which brings war. Deng Xiaoping made this point in his interview in Time magazine this week.

When he was asked about Gorbachev's proposal to cut nuclear arsenals by 50 percent, he observed that the United States and the Soviet Union now have enough to destroy the world ten times and that reducing that by 50 percent would mean that each would have enough left to destroy the world only five times. He then observed, "Even if there will be an agreement of a 50 percent reduction, I don't think it will solve the present problem." President Reagan is on target when he insists that conflicts which could lead to the use of arms must be addressed if we want to attack the central problem of reducing the danger of war. However, as a political realist he knows that he must make a credible effort to reach an arms control agreement with the Soviet Union if he is to retain support for necessary defense budgets in the United States and the support of our allies abroad.

How will the two leaders get along when they meet each other? The answer to that question is easy -- they will hit it off very well. Ronald Reagan can't help being a gentleman and Gorbachev is too smart not to act like one. But it is also irrelevant.

In the middle ages, a king was about to wage war on one of his neighbors. One of his advisors urged that he meet with his neighboring monarch so that they could get to know each other and understand each other and then it might not be necessary to go to war. The king responded, "We understand each other;

we both want the same thing."

President Reagan and Gorbachev understand each other; but they don't want the same thing. Gorbachev wants to defend and extend communism. President Reagan wants to defend and extend freedom. We have irreconcilable differences, some of which will never be settled. But we have one common interest -- to avoid war over our differences. But even in this respect we also have a profound difference. President Reagan seeks peace as an end in itself. Gorbachev seeks victory without war.

Gorbachev's first priority at Geneva will be to prove to his colleagues in the Soviet hierarchy that he is a strong leader and able to hold his own with the leader of the Free World. As his second priority, he wants to come through as a reasonable leader seeking peace in order to appeal to the peace activists in Europe and the United States. But if he has to choose between the two, coming out as a strong leader will be his first priority.

President Reagan does not need to prove that he is a strong leader. His primary goal will be to prove that he is for peace. This is the case for two reasons; because he sincerely believes in peace and wants to be remembered in history as one who made a breakthrough for peace.

What then can we expect at Geneva? Because the parties are so far apart, it would be unrealistic to expect that a final major arms control agreement

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could be negotiated. But it is possible that the two leaders could agree on general principles and goals for arms control and set up a process which would make it possible for the two to sign an agreement before President Reagan completes his term of office.

We cannot expect that the Soviets will cease being communists but the Geneva summit will provide an opportunity to make the point that both the Soviet Union and the United States have an interest in not being drawn into war by Third World conflicts. The Soviets face a choice -- to seek a better relationship with the United States or to probe in Third World areas where we have a vital interest. They can't talk peace in Geneva and engage in and support war in Asia, Africa, and Central America.

There will be agreements on consular, cultural and commercial issues which while not addressing our fundamental differences can provide contacts which could marginally improve the atmosphere for more constructive negotiations about those differences.

Does this mean because there will not be a major arms control agreement that the Geneva summit will be a failure? On the contrary, the meeting in Geneva will be a success. It will be an unquestioned success from a public relations standpoint. From a substantive standpoint, we can expect at least one major achievement -- the agreement of the two leaders to meet again.

As Henry Grunwald has pointed out, the tension between the United States and the Soviet Union is not a problem for which there is a solution but a permanent condition which can be alleviated but not cured. Regular summit meetings between the leaders of the two superpowers are essential if we are to manage those differences over the long period of time in which we will continue to have them.

The greatest danger of war we face today is not that one nation would launch a nuclear strike against the other. The greatest danger of war is miscalculation. When the two leaders meet they may not like each other and they may not trust each other but at least the very fact that they know each other will mean that they will reduce the possibility that one might misjudge the other and underestimate the other's will to resist in the event that actions are taken which threaten its vital interests.

In the run up to Geneva, it is vitally important to keep that meeting in perspective. Because Gorbachev is only 57 years of age and could possibly live long enough to meet with as many as five American Presidents, the point has been made that he is not in a hurry. If he can't make a deal he likes with President Reagan, he will wait for his successor. Others breathlessly intone that this is President Reagan's only chance to assure his place

in history as a peacemaker. Not true. This is President Reagan's first meeting with the Russians but not his last. It is far more important for him to lay a solid foundation now for a better agreement later than to make a bad agreement now in order not to disappoint excessive public expectations. The greatest service he could provide is to leave a process for his successors for negotiating over our differences in the future and not fighting over them.

Looking ahead, I do not believe that there will be a nuclear war. On the other hand, I do not see a world without conflict. The greatest advantage the United States has in this continuing conflict is not the power of our arms which can prevent defeat but the power of our ideas which can assure victory. That is why it is so important for the economy of the United States to be strong, free, and productive. The business executives in this audience serve the nation and particularly the nation's foreign policy when they operate their businesses in an efficient and productive manner. We must have a strong economy if we are to afford the defense expenditures which will be necessary for a long period of time. We need a strong economy if we are to finance the indispensable aid programs for our friends and allies abroad which are essential if we are to have an effective foreign policy. Most important of all, we

need a strong productive economy as a powerful example to others around the world of how freedom works.

We are engaged in a long struggle. We are on the right side. But history is strewn with the wreckage of superior civilizations of the past who were overrun by barbarians. British strategist, Sir Robert Thompson has written, "National strength equals people plus applied resources times will." We have the people. We have the resources. The question is do we have the will to continue to provide leadership for the Free World? It is understandable that many Americans tire of this role. We are just recovering from the trauma of defeat in Vietnam. As we celebrated the fortieth anniversary of the United Nations this past week, we were constantly reminded that a great majority of the new nations who have joined that organization since it was founded 40 years ago consistently vote against the United States, even though we provide generous foreign aid to most of them.

Despite these understandable frustrations, the United States must continue to play the role as the major leader in the Free World. We must do so because without the United States the rest of the world would be helpless before totalitarian aggression. We must do so not just for others but for ourselves. Whether we like it or not, we must

recognize the fact that we live in one world. The United States cannot long exist as an island of freedom in a world dominated by totalitarians.

There is another reason which cannot be described in material terms. General deGaulle once said, "France is never her true self unless she was engaged in a great enterprise." This is true of nations, it is true of individuals, it is true of every man and woman in this room. To serve the cause of peace and freedom in the world is a great enterprise. Leadership in the Free World is not a burden to be borne grimly but a challenge worthy of a great people.