

Soviets Satisfied: Relations

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MOSCOW, July 3—“We survived Watergate. Soviet-American relations survived Watergate.”

That curt summation of the past week's summit conference, offered here today by a Soviet student of American affairs, may explain why Soviet officials and journalists today insisted that the Soviet-American summit talks were a success.

The Soviet assessment of the summit, repeated by many sources at today's mammoth Kremlin reception for President Nixon is, in effect, that Mr. Nixon's meetings with Soviet party chief Leonid Brezhnev and the other Soviet leaders succeeded because they did not fail.

“The mood was very good,” one senior official close to the talks said. “At least we had movement on very important questions.”

Whether this studied optimism disguised a tough or aggressive Soviet bargaining position in the summit negotiations could not be determined.

The Soviets were in a difficult position on the central problem of the summit, controls on multiple-warhead nuclear rockets. They have not begun to deploy this sophisticated weapon and are years behind the United States in its development and production.

The Soviet are obviously anxious to catch up with the United States, but they have also seemed anxious to persuade the Americans not to

proceed into the next generation of nuclear weapons while the Soviets are closing the gap in this generation.

This was never a very hopeful proposition, and the Soviets may have decided that they must concentrate on catching up in the short run in order to bargain on a more equal footing later.

Whatever happened in the talks here, the Soviets have decided to declare them a success. The summit “went normally,” said Boris Ponomarev, a candidate member of the Politburo. It was precisely that innocuous normality which seemed to please the Soviet side.

Before the summit began, Soviet officials made it clear that they did not expect dramatic results. The main objective, they said repeatedly,

was to make these summit meetings regular, normal happenings, and to give “new impulses” to the process of detente. The summit's modest achievements lived up to those modest expectations.

“We have to wait and see what happens to Nixon,” one Soviet official said, predicting that more substantial agreements on controlling nuclear weapons might follow relatively quickly if the President regains his stride in Washington, or if he is forced from office.

“We don't care if President Ford signs the next agreements,” this same man observed.

This is a relatively new attitude in Moscow. There was a time when Soviet officials feared that Watergate was

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the work of the enemies of detente, and a time too when this summit seemed in jeopardy because of Watergate. The Soviets were relieved that the summit actually took place, and pleased that Mr. Nixon came to Moscow with broad-based domestic support for his foreign policies, despite Watergate.

Informed Soviet sources said today that Mr. Nixon transmitted new proposals to Moscow on nuclear arms limitations before the summit began. Since no new agreements on this subject were reached, the Soviets apparently rejected Mr. Nixon's suggestions, perhaps at yesterday's unusual and long meeting of the Communist Party's Politburo.

Asked if this were the

case, a well-informed Soviet journalist replied obliquely: “It's better this way for President Nixon.” Like many other Soviets here this week, this journalist expressed the view that for the President, the ideal result of the summit would be something between that will please the conservatives but not anger the friends of detente,” another journalist said. “I think that's what he got.”

The Soviet Union recognized from the start that the possibilities for this summit were limited, or so Soviet officials are saying. Brezhnev made the point in his toast to Mr. Nixon last night.

He said the results of the summit were “new proof of the determination of both

sides” to improve bilateral relations and “work in the international arena for detente and peace.”

“This is precisely what we expected from the talks,” Brezhnev continued, apparently acknowledging the Soviets' modest ambitions for the summit, “and that is why we express our satisfaction with their results.”

Brezhnev also said that the package of agreements reached here this week “could probably have been wider,” but Soviet sources today insisted this was not an expression of disappointment. Rather, these sources said, Brezhnev was pointing out the obvious fact that the two sides had failed to agree on new ways to control multiple warhead rockets, or on

a complete ban of underground nuclear testing.

“We have plenty more to do,” one Soviet official observed. “You know, the preparations weren't so thorough this time.”

Every Soviet official approached at today's reception shared a general optimism that the process of detente will continue, and that new strategic arms agreements can be reached.

“While we have been here,” one Soviet expert on American affairs observed today, “our journalists in America have been taking interviews from prominent Democrats. You know, they all approve of what is going on. Any future Democratic president will follow the line of detente. That's the important thing.”