

Sergei Kislyak: "Russia was against dividing the Conference into a camp of winners and a handful of losers."

Sergei Kislyak, deputy head of the Russian delegation at the Conference on the Review and Extension of the NPT and the "conductor" of the Russian delegation during the negotiations. He gave an exclusive interview to "Yaderny Kontrol" editor Vladimir Orlov on May 12 at U.N. headquarters in New York.

Q. What is the main outcome of the Conference for the Russian delegation?

A. We successfully solved the task consisting of five parts: first, the Treaty has been extended; second, the Treaty has been indefinitely extended; third, the Treaty has been extended without voting, by consensus; fourth, the mechanism for effective implementation of the Treaty has been strengthened; fifth, all final documents of the Conference promotes Russia's national interests.

Q. If the situation at the Conference were not so favorable for the nuclear states, would you have considered other ways to extend the NPT?

A. Our policy was to indefinitely extend the Treaty. It is fundamentally important to us that while Russia is reducing its nuclear arsenals, no new sources of nuclear danger should emerge near its borders. But the major outcome, that is indefinite extension without voting, was not only achieved by Russia and the other nuclear states. All delegations had been working together to find a mutually acceptable formula. As a result, we reached a really high level of honest and fruitful cooperation. We mean the cooperation with the states that were willing to extend the NPT indefinitely as well as with the states that were not ready for that. We paid attention to the fact that the Conference was distinguished by a high degree of coordination, including those who did not share our point of view.

We did our best to explain in detail why we think that indefinite extension is the only correct way-out. We had been explaining our stance and perfecting the formulas in auditoriums as well as in the lobby.

Q. In the lobby they spoke about the "firmness," sometimes even the "uncompromising character" of Russia's stance...

A. Yes, there was firmness: it was the firmness of our beliefs. Nevertheless, we managed to achieve a positive outcome not only through firmness, but through ample cooperation, willingness to sit down and discuss any problems without exception. As a result, we had a convincing demonstration that the majority of countries

are in favor of indefinite extension. Finally, 111 participants at the Conference became co-authors to our resolution. At that moment we could afford voting since the result had already been determined. And some countries, probably, wanted to vote. The Russian delegation also was ready for a vote, though we thought it would divide the Conference into a camp of winners and a handful of losers. This was undesirable and would not have strengthened the Treaty. Our stance was received with understanding. As a result of such understanding, we reached the final compromise, the one that solved the problem without voting, by consensus. At last, the Russian delegation thought it very important not only to extend the Treaty indefinitely, but also to unite its parties in an effort to assure its full implementation.

Q. What do you understand under the "package of agreements" that was created at the Conference?

A. This package consists of three documents (Resolutions L.4, L.5 and L.6 in the wording given by Russia, the United States and Great Britain), adopted by the Conference without voting at the morning plenary meeting on May 11. Each document has its own character. Thus, the decision on indefinite extension (L.6) is a legal document that follows from the Treaty, its Article X.2. Two other documents (L.4 and L.5) may be characterized as political agreements on further implementation of the NPT and as detailed elaboration of full-scale cooperation in this area. It goes without question that both resolutions strengthen the key part of the package, e.g. L.6, and the Treaty itself.

I would point out that the whole mechanism for further implementation of the provisions contained in the NPT as well as the Principles and Objectives of nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament suit Russia's stance and fully promote its interests. The adopted documents have laid a firm basis for further international cooperation in the area of peaceful use of nuclear energy, in particular, for cooperation between the nuclear and non-nuclear states. These provisions are very important and helpful.

I would also point out the fact that all decisions of the Conference, including the decision on extension, were greeted with applause...

Q. ...Yes, but by laughter, too, or even by unanimous surprise: how President Dhanapala managed in a few minutes to pass a decision that had proved impossible to reach for many years...

A. I would not call it a surprise. It was met by relief and contentment. After hard work in the lobby we found an innovative form for the final decision. I'm sure you paid attention to the fact that the form of the final consensus is unusual, if not unique in diplomatic practice: everybody agreed that all

requirements for extension of the NPT have been satisfied, which means that a majority is in favor of indefinite extension and there is no sense in voting...

I think that the applause on the adoption of the package of decisions meant that in the long run all were winners and were satisfied with the set of the documents adopted: there were those who, like Russia, initially favored indefinite extension, and those who basically had nothing against it, but wanted to make clear which provisions of the NPT would be fulfilled; and finally, those who did not agree with indefinite extension. The desires of the last ones as well as their statements about objectives of nuclear disarmament were taken into account in the "final package."

Q. Russia very carefully approached the issue of the period of NPT extension. For example, working on the text of the final resolution (which was not adopted) you suggested that the tough "must (will, shall) sign by the end of 1996" be changed into the mild "should."

A. We proceed from the assumption that coordinated objectives should be attained. We'll always be ready to pursue them. But on the other hand, we should see things as they are. The New-York Conference, which is not empowered to resolve all questions, cannot adopt imperative decisions for a Geneva conference. But I fully share the political objective regarding "working out a comprehensive nuclear test ban treaty (CTBT) as soon as possible."

Q. Criticism of Israel at the Conference did not find its adequate reflection in Resolution L.8, to which Russia was one of the co-authors. It is obviously the price of a diplomatic compromise, and we should not have expected anything different. The question is whether Russia and other declared nuclear states will be able to make steps taking into consideration concerns of the Arab countries?

A. Russia has always been concerned with the fact that some states with a developed nuclear potential are outside the NPT, whether it be Israel, India or Pakistan. From our perspective, the NPT will be fully effective only when all states adhere to it.

Nevertheless, we would hardly agree with an approach that makes extension of the NPT dependent on adherence to it of this or that state. At the same time there was another approach, which we fully share: first to extend the NPT in everybody's interests, and then to strive for adherence by other countries. That's why if you mean setting an objective, then we fully agree with those who insist on Israel and other countries' accession to the Treaty. We not only share it, we have also been working in this direction, using all of our diplomatic levers.

You have seen for yourself the very different stances states took toward the Israel problem. Many Arab countries posed it as one of the central problems of the Conference. I agree with you that Resolution L.8 adopted by the conference is a compromise. Though I do not find it bad the way its wording is composed. Any specialist, including those in the nonaligned countries, will understand who it appeals to. I have the impression that almost all Arab countries were happy with the resolution. Finally, the decision on indefinite extension of the NPT has provided another key factor for "work" with countries that are not parties to the treaty since it has eliminated hypothetical objections that might have appeared if the NPT were not permanent. Indeed, if the Treaty had to be extended each 10 or 20 years, one could not be sure that it was worth acceding to and would not lapse in a few years. Now the NPT is permanent and stable, its provisions became firm and final norms of international law.

Q. Resolution on the Principles and Objectives of nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament gives a whole set of tactical, or short-term, priorities of non-proliferation. Which of them are most important to Russia?

A. To Russia as well as to other countries, the highest priority is completion of the negotiations on nuclear test bans. Number one, this question is ripe. Number two, Russia has initiated this step and promoted it with its moratorium. Though reaching decision on this moratorium was no easy matter to Russia.

Q. Will the moratorium last until conclusion of a CTBT?

A. There is a presidential decree regarding the moratorium which is in force. I hope that work in Geneva will speed up after the New-York Conference is over. Our stance here is clear-cut: we want the treaty to be signed as soon as possible. The Russian President spoke out in favor of signing this treaty already this year. Thus, the desire of the Conference to sign it not later than 1996 is in our interests.