

## THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

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## MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

PARTICIPANTS: President Ford  
 Henry A. Kissinger, Secretary of State  
 William G. Hyland, Deputy Assistant to the  
 President for National Security Affairs  
 Helmut Sonnenfeldt, Counsellor, State Department

Andrey Gromyko, Foreign Minister  
 G. Kornienko, Ministry of Foreign Affairs  
 A. Dobrynin, USSR Ambassador to the US

DATE & TIME: Friday, October 1, 1976, 4:15 p. m.

PLACE: The Oval Office

President: It's been a year since I've seen you; there have been ups and downs. The long range objectives established in Vladivostok and at the Conference in Helsinki I want continued in the future, as long as I am in office. The road is not smooth, but basically it is where it was when I took office. SALT has slowed down because of the campaign. I assure you that after November 2 it can again become serious. We are trying to be constructive in South Africa, and events should proceed with a minimum of outside involvement. We have no interest in a permanent role there.

Over the next four years, we should move ahead on MBFR, also on the Middle East. Let me repeat what I said to the General Secretary: our two countries must continue to put relations on a better basis; despite certain international problems, I believe we can carry it out.

Gromyko: Generally pleased to hear your introductory remarks, the meaning of which is that you confirm that you follow and intend to follow the course that has been taken in recent years, and that this is the basic line of the US and Soviet Union. This is also the basic problem I wanted to take up. Also SALT and the Middle East.

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XG-DS (3,1)  
 Per Brent Scowcroft

DECLASSIFIED

E.O. 12958, SEC. 3.5

NSC MEMO, 11/24/98, STATE DEPT. GUIDELINES State Rev. CW 3/13/04  
 BY lm, NARA DATE 7/30/04

On both sides there are repeated statements, also by you, in favor of development of relations between Soviet Union and US on the basis of peaceful coexistence. Also notably in behalf of party and country by Leonid Brezhnev. Trust you are familiar with his remarks to the XXV Congress. Thus you and we have several times confirmed that we intend to continue on peaceful coexistence line, which is the most reasonable position. Recall this basic underlying concept embodied in US-Soviet documents: (1) Principles, (2) the Agreement on the Prevention of Nuclear War, and (3) Vladivostok understanding; though not yet finalized, its importance is immense, provided both sides finalize it. All that is well and good but I would be wrong if I didn't call attention to statements by the US not fully or at all in accord or even running counter to the line in these documents. I won't list who said what, where and on what occasion. Every day people have hammered into their minds we are arming without let up and that the US should increase its arms, as if the US were prodded by the Soviet Union. We categorically reject this. An unbiased observer knows that the facts are opposite. Second, the Soviet Union allegedly is acting contrary to the line, bringing influence to bear on countries in remote areas to further unilateral interests and trying to give detente a one-sided interpretation. Not just officials but others. But the state of affairs is not discussed, and no rebuff is given to these statements. So we ask ourselves where is the essence of US policy? The President, when he speaks in public on various occasions, or to us at high-level meetings, or at a different place. We make no statements running counter to our agreed line. Just a few days ago I made a statement at the UN.

The other specific example relates to the MIG 25 which accidentally came down on Japanese territory. We were taken aback by the US line (so also by the Japanese line). As soon as that happened, a statement on Belenko by the White House: "If he wants asylum we'll grant it." A very hostile act. The plane is still not given back. US and Japan took the plane apart as if they owned it, like spoils of war. We can't qualify this as anything but hostile. In 1970, during the Vietnam war, a US transport carrying large group came down on Soviet territory. We at once let them go. So there was another plane with two US generals in South Caucasus and we let them go. That is the practice of civilized countries. But that line didn't suit the US and Japan. We are entitled to believe that the US would give Japanese friendly advice how to act, but no press stories, Belenko acted voluntarily. We don't believe a word of it. Force was used. Confirmed by doctors. Don't know what your military will do, but incident has injected great doubt into relations, especially as far as confidence is concerned. We now understand situation better than before: there is great difference in word and deed of US. General Secretary Brezhnev told us to tell you he is very bitter and indignant. How could you do it. How could you meet and look each other in the eye, and raise glasses and drink to friendship. Brezhnev says he just can't conceive of the whole thing. Has caused great indignation in the whole country.

President: Some preliminary comments: 1) What I said at the outset is policy. What I have said publicly is that the relationship has ups and downs. Basic relationships must continue for peace.

But the President has a responsibility to maintain our security, as you do. Our efforts will fall within limits of Vladivostok agreement. We will maintain forces sufficient for security. Not incompatible with SALT agreement.

3) We have important differences over actions in far-off lands. We told you your actions in Angola were not helpful and hope it won't happen again.

4) On Belenko: We have traditional asylum policy. All the information we have shows he did it voluntarily. You were granted an interview with your officials. Your remarks about the transport and the two generals are quite different cases. They wanted to come back; Belenko wanted asylum. So, they are not comparable. General Secretary has to recognize there is a difference. If Lt. Belenko wants to go back, we'll accommodate his wishes. But he doesn't. But that sort of incident is no reason to cut relations. We did not precipitate the incident. This incident should not interfere with our broad relationship.

Gromyko: Time will pass and you will realize you've been misled, and you'll see the true circumstances concerning the plane and the desires of the pilot. Other occasions other people found themselves abroad and were asked to go back to tell the story of how they were treated. If we had used other means on American planes, some of them would have stayed in the Soviet Union.

Now on South Africa, there are no lack of statements that the Soviets are trying to interfere. Not a single soldier has ever been there. But US persons traveling there to advance US interests. We can't approve. Our attitude on racialism well-known since 1917. That's one view of what justice is all about, should be in the hands of majority people. Racism is not in anyone's interest. I took part in UN Charter drafting. Many clauses due to the collapse of the colonial system due to US-Soviet cooperation after war, and that went into the UN Charter. Now you assert we are taking bad position. We have no desire to interfere. No one should say we are white and you are black, therefore we know better what's good for you. My own speech in UN consistent with this.

We are endeavoring to display tact and delicacy in your election campaign. We favor development of relations and line that has taken shape.

President: I appreciate that. US has never believed in colonialism. We gave freedom to the Philippines. And that is the best evidence we don't believe in it. We have no racism in the US and don't believe in it on a world-wide basis. So what we are doing in Africa is not in behalf of colonial ambitions. We want Africans to solve African problems and are glad to discuss it.

Gromyko: Can we take up SALT.

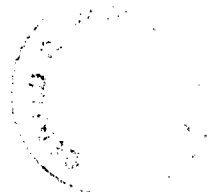
President: Sure.

Gromyko: We believe as before that this problem is of exceptional importance. We will finally abide by Vladivostok understanding. Both sides should make all effort to translate understanding into a new agreement. Should be in strict conformity with Vladivostok principles. Two basic differences stand in the way of a new agreement: (1) Cruise missiles. We set out our position in detail to Dr. Kissinger when he was last in Moscow. On that occasion the US side set one position. At that time we thought there was a basis for agreement. Dr. Kissinger said it would take more time to think it over; still no reply has been received. (2) Backfire: the position of the US side on this bomber is still being talked about, but we have on more than one occasion set forth that the Backfire is not a strategic bomber; doesn't have attributes and we gave you arguments and reasons. Those were given to Dr. Kissinger by the General-Secretary. We can't take any other positions. It cannot be a strategic bomber and can't be so regarded. General Secretary said not only is it not a strategic bomber, not will we make it one. This has been said at a responsible level, so you can see how embarrassing it would be if it were discovered to do so. It can't be hidden.

Our cruise missile position is the same as when Dr. Kissinger was in Moscow.

Don't think we should prohibit only ballistic missiles above certain level but not prohibit cruise missiles. At one point US told us all to resolve the MIRV question for confidence: what missiles shall be counted as MIRV. We agreed if missile tested once with MIRV, all missiles of that type would be counted. Not easy for us, a major concession. But stressed it was only valid if cruise missile and Backfire also settled as organic whole. In February we got your proposal to leave suspended cruise missile/Backfire while talks go on.

President: In February.



Gromyko: This was tantamount to saying what is acceptable to the US should be solved but what is not acceptable should be only talked about. This is not good. We don't want an agreement to be unclear and things left unclear. We want a new SALT agreement and assume so does the US. We urge you to take another look; perhaps the advice some of your agencies give you is not in the broader interest of the US. Don't know if it can be done before or after the election. But we are prepared to go ahead. If not, we will regret it deeply; if it is bogged down and fails it would damage the interests of both countries and peace.

President: I wanted it a year ago. Dr. Kissinger went in January and thought there was a narrowing of differences. In February I wrote General Secretary Brezhnev to suggest a settlement of cruise missile and Backfire by 1979. You rejected it in March. Hoped if you disagreed you'd make a new proposal, but you didn't. After November it will be possible to sit down; if you have a proposal, we'll listen. If the interim idea is no good, then we should talk. Henry?

Kissinger: Thought maybe we should reflect on what has been said. In a letter we could let them know about a reasonable timetable in a week or so. As I had understood, the General Secretary is prepared to reduce 2400 to 2300 or below.

Gromyko: This is not excluded.

Kissinger: As I understand it, the Soviets reject deferral. So you, Mr. President, have not yet considered with your advisers how to proceed.

Dobrynin: You gave us a reply.

President: But yours was a rejection.

Gromyko: Think it over. If there is any possibility along the lines spoken of by Kissinger, it would be attractive. Something in that area might get us out of dilemma. The Middle East?

Gromyko: Points of settlement are: 1) Return of occupied territory. 2) Solution of Palestine problem. But from the outset, to place matter on realistic basis, those two should be supplemented by two others (in terms of principles). First, recognition by Arabs and all states of rights of Israel and others to independent existence. Second, end to state of war in Middle East.



President: UN resolutions 338 and 242 offer a basis. Problem is to get over hump on PLO. If some mechanism can be found maybe all four points can be settled at same time.

Gromyko: We feel these four major items for Geneva agenda have been recognized by all parties. True not each party gives some importance to each time. But they all recognize items. So why not reconvene Geneva and place them on the agenda. We gave Dr. Kissinger our proposal and also to other parties. Want them to think it over. We don't think accept some other separate conference and start into a new jungle.

Re Palestinians -- it is interwoven with all other questions in the Middle East. On adopting agenda without Palestinians, they'd have to be consulted. Then commissions. But can't have full conference without Palestinians. Question of war and peace is more important than procedure. But the agenda can be adopted in one meeting. One single Geneva conference. No preliminary separate conference. No one can believe these four points solely in Soviet interest. Involve all the parties. So why not try. Find common language and cooperate or have contact. If Palestinians agree, there could be opening meeting to approve agenda, without Palestinians. Only one meeting. But there would be understanding that as soon as agenda is approved, the Palestinians come in. If that takes time, then it is OK, but no separate conference.

President: Suggestion merits careful consideration. I'll sit down with Henry and we'll be in touch.

President: We'll contact Palestinians and let you know.