



**Wilson
Center**

Digital Archive
International History Declassified

digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org

March 10, 1970

**Memorandum of Conversation, Ambassador
Dobrynin and Dr. Henry A. Kissinger**

Citation:

"Memorandum of Conversation, Ambassador Dobrynin and Dr. Henry A. Kissinger", March 10, 1970, Wilson Center Digital Archive, From the Six Day War to Yom Kipper: Selected US Documents on the Arab-Israeli Conflict, 1969-1973, a briefing book prepared for the international workshop, "New Evidence on the Arab-Israeli Conflict" (Wilson Center, June 11, 2007).

<https://digitalarchive.umd.edu/document/240281>

Summary:

Kissinger and Dobrynin discuss the upcoming SALT talks, the situation in the Middle East, and Vietnam.

Original Language:

English

Contents:

Original Scan

MEMORANDUMTHE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTONSECRET/SENSITIVE/EYES ONLYMEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

Date: March 10, 1970

Place: East Wing, White House

Participants: Ambassador Anatoliy Dobrynin
Dr. Henry A. Kissinger
Dr. Lawrence E. Lynn

I met Dobrynin in the Military Aide's Office at the White House at 3:00 p.m. The meeting had come about because during our last conversation Dobrynin had indicated some doubt about the relationship between the Safeguard components for area defense and the Safeguard components of point defense, and I told him that I would give him a briefing explaining the difference.

I took Larry Lynn of my staff along. We talked briefly about the problem of area defense and of point defense, the various types of missiles that were necessary for both, and why the area defense we were planning was not a threat to the Soviet Union. It was clear, however, that Dobrynin was not interested in that. He asked a few, perfunctory questions which, incidentally, showed that he had studied the subject very carefully. He then said that he wanted to talk to me alone.

He made the following points:

- I. SALT. Dobrynin said he had been asked by the Soviet Government to make three points with respect to SALT:
 - a. The Soviet Government agrees with our proposition that he and I might have an exchange of views both before and during the SALT talks with a view to coming to a conclusion between us on some of the principal outstanding issues.

SECRET/SENSITIVE/EYES ONLY

WCF 489, PTF, D/K 1970 [p. 2], v. 1

DECLASSIFIED
E.O. 12958, Sect. 3.3Reproduced from the open files
of the Nixon Presidential
Materials Staff

By K U J NARA Date 11/20/02

SECRET/SENSITIVE/EYES ONLY

- 2 -

b. The Soviet Government wanted the President to know that the Soviets were approaching the Vienna discussions very seriously and would try to find an area of agreement.

c. The Soviets were prepared to discuss either comprehensive or separate agreement. They believed that a comprehensive agreement would be better because it would lead also to a solution of other political problems. But they were prepared to make separate agreements, provided it was understood that the limited agreements would not preclude coming eventually to a comprehensive agreement.

Dobrynin said that the Soviet Government had some doubts about the seriousness with which we approached the negotiations and that it had some genuine worries whether we really meant to have a negotiation. I told him that we were extremely serious about the negotiations and that we were hoping to come to an agreement. I said that they should know the President well enough by now to realize that our approach was always concrete and detailed and that the way to find out whether we were serious would be for them to engage in serious discussions. I was sure they would not be disappointed.

Dobrynin then turned the conversation to the Middle East.

II. Middle East. Dobrynin said he had been asked by the Soviet Government to give me an answer to some representations I had made to him on February 10. These representations were as follows:

a. It had come to my attention that one of the junior officers of the Soviet Embassy had complained to one of our journalists that we did not take the Kosygin letter sufficiently seriously.

b. We are assuming that serious communications will be made directly by Dobrynin to me and therefore we will not comment officially.

c. We want Dobrynin to know that the Kosygin letter received the highest level attention. Given the fact that the

SECRET/SENSITIVE/EYES ONLY

SECRET/SENSITIVE/EYES ONLY

3

Soviet side had distributed it in regular channels in London and Paris, we had no choice but to deal with it in a similar fashion here.

d. The President is prepared to have bilateral discussions on the Middle East in the Dobrynin-Kissinger channel with a view to finding a solution fair to everybody.

e. We want the Soviet leaders to know that the introduction of Soviet combat personnel in the Middle East would be viewed with the gravest concern. We are choosing this method of communication because we do not want to make any formal demarche. At the same time, we want to make sure that the Soviet leaders are under no misapprehension about the possibility of grave consequences.

Dobrynin said in reply to these propositions the Soviet Government wanted to make the following comments in strictest confidence:

"Under instructions from Moscow I would like in confidence to express some considerations in connection with the aggravation of the military situation in the Middle East.

"Guided by special responsibility of our countries for the maintenance of peace A. N. Kosygin has already drawn the attention of President Nixon to the dangerous escalation of Israel of military actions against the UAR and other Arab countries and called upon the U. S. Government to use its influence so that Israel stop its armed attacks, dangerous for the cause of peace. The head of the Soviet Government stated at the same time that on its part the Soviet Union would show good will and determination to act in the interests of peace in the Middle East.

"It has been noted in Moscow that the American side, persistently putting forward the proposal on the cessation of fire on both sides, gives as its reasons the need to create a favorable situation for the search of political settlement.

SECRET/SENSITIVE/EYES ONLY

RF, 489, PTF, D/K 1970 [p. 2], v. 1

DECLASSIFIED
E.O. 12958, Sect. 3.6

SECRET/SENSITIVE/EYES ONLY

4

At the same time the United States ignores the fact that Israel not only occupied by means of aggression substantial Arab territories for the liberation of which the Arab peoples are now fighting but continues barbaric air raids against areas deep in the UAR and other Arab countries.

"We would like to draw the attention of the American side to the need for a realistic approach towards this question with due regard to the political situation in the Arab countries caused by the people's indignation at the Israeli aggression. In order to have the escalation of military operations in the Middle East discontinued it is necessary first of all that Israel take practical steps in this direction. We have reason to count that if the Israelis stop their bombings of the UAR, the UAR on its part will display restraint in its actions, without, of course, any official statements to that effect.

"I would like to ask you, Mr. Kissinger, to bring the context of this conversation to the attention of President Nixon. I would like to receive a reply to this communication."

Dobrynin asked me what I thought of these propositions. I said it was very interesting; I would take it up with the President and let him know.

Dobrynin then said that he had to tell me in confidence that he had been instructed to call on Secretary Rogers and would offer the continuation of bilateral discussions. I said I had wondered when they would get tired of the quadripartite meetings. Dobrynin smiled and said, "We'll let the quadripartite meetings go on, but we prefer to talk in the bilateral forum." He said that, as he remembered it, there were two outstanding issues: one having to do with the state of peace, and the second having to do with the obligations of the two sides. He could tell me in strictest confidence that the hang-up on the first point would be met by the Soviet formulation.

SECRET/SENSITIVE/EYES ONLY

DECLASSIFIED
E.O. 12958, Sect. 3.0

CF, 489, PTF, D/K 1970 [p. 23], v. 1

Reproduced from the open files
of the Nixon Presidential

MAIA Date 11/20/01

SECRET/SENSITIVE/EYES ONLY

5

Up to now, the Soviets had only offered a cessation of the state of war; they were now ready to talk about establishing a state of peace. As for the obligations of the two sides, the Soviet Union also was prepared to make a concession. Until now the Soviet Union had insisted that control of irregular forces would not be possible or would be solved automatically. They were now ready to offer a formulation which would make it the responsibility of the Arab governments.

He said there were a number of other issues with which he did not wish to bother me. For example, he said the Soviet Union wanted the UAR to have full sovereignty over the Sinai, but also that it recognized that Sharm al Sheikh and surrounding territories would be put under a UN force which could be removed only by the unanimous vote of the Security Council's permanent members. In other words, we could have a veto over the international presence in Sharm al Sheikh.

He asked me what I thought our reaction to these proposals would be. I said I would have to study them but he could be sure that if there were a positive possibility of making progress, we would be very receptive. I would be in touch with him next week about it. Dobrynin asked whether he could come to me if he reached some impasse with Sisco or the Secretary. I said I was always willing to see him.

Dobrynin then pointed out that it would be possible to arrange some formula for direct negotiations as long as we did not use the "Rhodes Formula." And, of course, both sides would have to join the document.

(All these things seem to me major steps forward.)

III. Vietnam. At the end of the conversation, Dobrynin asked how the trip to Paris had gone. I said that it had been all right. I asked him what he had heard about it. He said the Vietnamese had told him that no real progress had been made and that I had had nothing new to say. He asked me whether I had been encouraged. I said I have been in this position too long to be either encouraged or discouraged. Dobrynin said, "Well, if there was any more than what they have told us, it would be the first time that they haven't told us the truth." I said I wouldn't want to shake his confidence in his allies.

SECRET/SENSITIVE/EYES ONLY

KCF 489, PTF, D/K 1970 [p.2], v.1

Reproduced from the open files
of the Nixon Presidential

DECLASSIFIED
E.O. 12958, Sect. 3.3

SECRET/SENSITIVE/EYES ONLY

6

Comments:

Dobrynin made a number of significant concessions:

- (1) He offered a ceasefire along the Suez Canal, thus enabling us to show the Israelis that we have achieved something for them with our policy on the Kosygin letter.
- (2) In the negotiations on Egypt our policy of relative firmness has paid off on all contested issues. The Soviet Union has made a first move and, while it may not be enough, at least it showed that holding firm and offering no concessions was the right course.

SECRET/SENSITIVE/EYES ONLY

CF 489, PTF, D/K 1970 [p. 2], V. 1

Reproduced from the open files
of the Mission to the Soviet Union

DECLASSIFIED
E.O. 12958, Sect. 3.0