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(Vladivostok, U.S.S.R.)

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THE WHITE HOUSE

PRESS CONFERENCE  
OF  
HENRY A. KISSINGER  
SECRETARY OF STATE  
AND  
ASSISTANT TO THE PRESIDENT FOR  
NATIONAL SECURITY AFFAIRS

1:35 A.M. (U.S.S.R. Time)

MR. NESSEN: Gentlemen, as you can see, the Secretary will brief you on today's meeting.

Let me quickly run through the sequence of events so the Secretary can devote his time to substance.

The first meeting lasted from 6:15 to 8:15 and all the participants who are listed in the briefing that Jack gave you took part in that. There was then a half hour break during which the President and the Secretary took a walk. The meetings resumed at 8:45 and lasted until 11:30.

Q Ron, do you have the walk in the right place? We were just given it in another place.

MR. NESSEN: I will straighten this out after the Secretary. I just want to tell you quickly what the sequence was.

The second meeting lasted from 8:45 to 11:30. The President, the General Secretary, the Secretary of State and the Foreign Minister attended that. Then, there was a half hour break from 11:30 until midnight.

The last meeting lasted from midnight until 12:30. The four participants, plus Ambassador Dobrynin, took part in that. The dinner was then postponed. The President walked back to his dacha with his staff and had a snack about which I will tell you later.

The schedule for tomorrow is for the meetings to resume at 10 o'clock until approximately 2 o'clock, at which time the dinner that was canceled tonight will take place at 2 o'clock.

I will give you further details later, but I think at this point you would like to hear about the substance of the meetings from Secretary Kissinger.

SECRETARY KISSINGER: I can't go into too much substance and as a matter of fact, I am here primarily because I promised some of you on the airplane that I would be here.

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(OVER)

There were two major topics discussed today on the train ride. For about an hour and a half, there was a general review of U.S.-Soviet relations and the world situation. It was a get-acquainted session between the President and the General Secretary. And I think it went very well.

All the rest of the discussions this evening concerned SALT -- that is all of the discussions that Ron Nessen mentioned -- dealt with the subject of SALT.

I think that you remember, as I told you, I believe that progress was made in October. I think that we went further along the road that was charted in October. We went into considerable detail and many aspects of it and we will continue the discussions tomorrow morning. And certainly, enough has already been discussed to give impetus to the negotiations in Geneva.

Now, how much more precise we can be tomorrow, what further details can be developed, that remains to be seen and we will, of course, brief you after the session tomorrow and let you have the results.

We will undoubtedly discuss other issues tomorrow, including the Middle East and Europe, but today, the exclusive focus after the train ride was on SALT.

Barry?

Q Mr. Secretary, did you say that there would be nothing left to discuss because you have already achieved the optimum of what you expected to achieve at this meeting?

SECRETARY KISSINGER: Well, if we had already achieved the optimum that is achievable, there would not be anything left to discuss tomorrow.

We had a very satisfactory talk today. I didn't have any very precise expectations about what we could get. I talked to a number of you and I think I had explained that we will try to build on the discussions of October. That has been done. How much further we can go -- we are really now in areas of considerable technical complexity and relationship of various types of forces to each other, but I would expect that we will make some further progress tomorrow morning. In fact, I am reasonably confident that we will.

Helen?

Q Do you know if what has happened today could be called a breakthrough?

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SECRETARY KISSINGER: No, I would not call this a breakthrough. The last time I used the word "breakthrough" I suffered from it for months to come.

I think, certainly, enough was discussed today to help the negotiators considerably.

Q Dr. Kissinger, was there a specific proposal that was put forward by one side or the other?

SECRETARY KISSINGER: The sequence of events has been as follows: In October, in Moscow, the Soviet Union made a proposal, or advanced considerations, that I considered that we have described as constructive. Building on these considerations, the United States made some counter-proposals which will be before the Soviet leaders when we meet today.

The Soviet leaders, in turn, advanced some considerations of their own to which the President, in turn, responded today, so it is a process in which the views of the two sides are being brought closer without as yet being identical but we are in the same general ball park.

We are talking about the same thing, on the same principles, and each exchange refines the issues more clearly and brings them closer.

Q Mr. Secretary, are you talking about MIRVs? Can you give us any specifics of what area you are talking about?

SECRETARY KISSINGER: We are talking about comprehensive limitations including numbers as well as MIRVs.

Q Including numbers?

SECRETARY KISSINGER: Including overall numbers as well as MIRVs.

Q Do you think now that you have come closer to your goal in 1975 on an agreement?

SECRETARY KISSINGER: Well, I think we have come closer to our goal of having an agreement in 1975.

Q Dr. Kissinger, when you say overall numbers, as well as MIRVs, you are talking about total delivery systems or are you talking about total warheads or what?

SECRETARY KISSINGER: Well, this is one of the issues that is being discussed, but generally speaking, we are talking about total delivery systems.

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Q Total delivery systems?

SECRETARY KISSINGER: Yes.

Q What --

SECRETARY KISSINGER: Total delivery systems.

Q Has this been one of the subjects of discussion, how to define the number that you then will make known?

SECRETARY KISSINGER: Well, obviously, when you discuss strategic limitations, you discuss what sort of numbers would be considered appropriate as well as how you would then define them and this is part of the discussion.

Q Dr. Kissinger, to follow up what I asked before, as I understand the events as you described them, the sequence, today, the Soviets came forward with a proposal modifying their views on what we had given them earlier?

SECRETARY KISSINGER: Today, the Soviets responded to what we put before them which in turn, was the response to what they had put before us in October. That is correct.

Q And when was it that we gave this response to them?

SECRETARY KISSINGER: Oh, let's see. I guess on the Tuesday or Wednesday, whenever I had lunch with Ambassador Dobrynin. I guess on Wednesday before we left on the trip.

Q And it was at that lunch?

SECRETARY KISSINGER: That is right.

Q Dr. Kissinger, in connection with this meeting, are you optimistic?

SECRETARY KISSINGER: I am optimistic about this meeting, yes.

Q Mr. Secretary, how do the two men get along? Is there anything you can tell us about your personal view?

SECRETARY KISSINGER: I have the impression that the two men get along excellently. On the train ride, the atmosphere was friendly and was turning to cordiality towards the end. The subject of strategic arms is not one that lends itself to small talk, but in the breaks, there was an easy relationship and I think both sides are conscious of the responsibility they have in trying to make progress in this area and are conducting themselves accordingly. I think the relationship between the two men is good.

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Q Was the absence of the Watergate ever --

SECRETARY KISSINGER: Well, it is a different atmosphere from the one in July for many reasons.

Q How so?

SECRETARY KISSINGER: Well, in any event, President Nixon was a lame duck President, leaving Watergate aside. President Ford has announced that he is running for re-election in 1976 so he is not a lame duck President.

In July, for a variety of reasons, things were not ripe for an agreement. I think now, I am not saying things are ripe for an agreement here, but I think both sides are making a very serious effort to come to an agreement during 1975.

Q Did you ask President Ford to run to improve his negotiating stance?

SECRETARY KISSINGER: Would you repeat that question?

Q Did you urge President Ford to run to improve his negotiating stance?

SECRETARY KISSINGER: Did I urge him to run to improve -- that he run?

Oh, did I urge him to run?

Q Yes.

SECRETARY KISSINGER: I saw that article. I am not involved in domestic politics and anyone who takes my advice on that is in deep trouble.

Q Dr. Kissinger, would you say that the amount of time you spent on SALT today and the canceled dinner indicate that you are behind schedule in terms of your own expectations of the pace of this meeting?

SECRETARY KISSINGER: No, I would say that we have gotten into technical subjects of a complication that might indicate the opposite.

Q Dr. Kissinger, the walk that you took with the President, was this just for relaxation or was it necessary to discuss with the President in private certain decisions or other matters?

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SECRETARY KISSINGER: It was to take relaxation in private.

Q Mr. Secretary, considering the decision to go for a 10-year treaty was a decision by a lame duck President, is it still the way to go about this? Has there been any change in your assessment?

SECRETARY KISSINGER: I am not saying that a lame duck President cannot make correct decisions.

Q I realize that.

SECRETARY KISSINGER: I am saying a lame duck President runs up against the difficulty that his protagonists know the time limit of his term in office and I think that the decision to go for a 10-year agreement was absolutely the correct one, remains the correct one.

Q There were suggestions that it was an option that was not the top option, but it was an option just taking what could be --

SECRETARY KISSINGER: No. The fact of the matter is that when we analyzed in July, we were talking primarily about a 5-year agreement, five years from now. As we analyzed the difficulties we faced, we came unilaterally to the conclusion that to try to resolve these difficulties would not be worth it because both sides would be straining against the date that the agreement would last and therefore the break-out considerations would almost dominate the agreement itself. So, President Nixon and I came to the conclusion that in any event the effort that would have to be put into negotiating a 5-year agreement and then selling it at home would not really be worth it in terms of its substantive merit and therefore, we did not attempt to narrow the gap by concession here or there which could have kept the project going, but rather, moved it into a framework which seemed on substance more promising.

Q Has the progress been such that some sort of agreement will be signed here, and is there any change in our plans to leave tomorrow?

SECRETARY KISSINGER: No. I am certain that we will leave tomorrow. It may be a few hours later in the day than had been tentatively planned.

There is no possibility of signing a SALT agreement here. Whatever is provisionally agreed to here will have to be spelled out in very detailed negotiations which are going to be extremely complicated and which can easily fail. What we can do here is reach orders of magnitude, of directions in which to go, relationship of various categories to each other. That sort of thing can be done here.

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Spelling this out, what it means, what restraints are necessary, what inspection, what requirements there are for this, there is not enough technical expertise here and in any event, it is inconceivable that an agreement will be signed here.

How the guidelines will be given, that remains to be seen after the session tomorrow morning.

Q I take it that the Soviets are willing, however, to go into more detail here than you anticipated. You are saying that the Soviet Government is eager to sign an agreement next year. How much will the chance be improved now?

SECRETARY KISSINGER: Well, I really would rather wait with making an estimate on that after the session tomorrow. I would think the chances have been somewhat improved.

SECRETARY KISSINGER: Is it fair to say that the Soviets were willing to go into more detail here than what you had anticipated?

SECRETARY KISSINGER: No. I thought that there was a possibility that -- we knew the order of magnitude of the discussion because we had reached a point where a specific set of considerations had been put before us. We had replied in somewhat those terms.

We expect the answer to come back again in those terms but the discussion obviously required some detailed analyses. I think that it has gone reasonably well.

Q Mr. Secretary, would you please speculate on what considerations, political or otherwise, may have prompted the Russians to move in this direction and come this far and this much progress?

SECRETARY KISSINGER: Don't go overboard yet on progress. I am trying to give you a sense of movement. I have always stressed that this is a very difficult subject and it is quite possible that when we resume tomorrow, it will turn out that we will not go further than where we have reached tonight. I think both sides have realized, and I think the Soviet side has also realized, that at some point we will be so deeply involved on both sides in the next round of weapons development and procurement, that that cycle will become irreversible. The cycles can really be mastered only at certain strategic intervals and once they have gone a certain time, whatever that particular cycle is, will tend to be completed and one has to wait for the next one to come around.

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I think that realization that we have been stressing for a year, I think it is now accepted by both sides. And it is obvious that if the race continues that the United States will have to enter certain areas of weapons development that it would prefer not to have to do. I think it was a combination of factors like this that has accounted for the progress of the discussions of recent months.

Q Mr. Secretary, you seem to carefully delineate between a provisional agreement and a formal signing. Is there a possibility that by the time you leave here tomorrow evening you might have reached a provisional understanding?

SECRETARY KISSINGER: I have always believed, and have said so, that out of this meeting some guidelines to the negotiators could emerge, and some guides will certainly emerge. Now, whether they will take the form of announced guidelines or simply a general agreement to instruct the delegation; it is still too early to say.

I don't know what you would call a provisional agreement. There will not be a binding agreement; there will not be an agreement that reflects itself in the actions of the two sides at this meeting.

Q The question then is whether you are going to sign or not going to sign.

SECRETARY KISSINGER: That we cannot say until after the meeting tomorrow, but it depends on what you mean by announce. There will certainly be something about SALT in the communique.

Q Mr. Secretary, can you say whether or not the Soviets want to have our tactical nuclear weapons in Europe counted into numbers, strategic weapons?

SECRETARY KISSINGER: Well, I don't think I should go into all the individual details but when I said that the discussions concerned the relationship of various categories of weapons to each other, that has been one of the questions -- overseas systems has been one of the questions that in the past has been raised.

Q Dr. Kissinger, in the past, you talked about the desirability of trying to work out an agreement that would in fact be more simple than the complex arrangements that have previously been discussed. Are we in fact saying in our response that both we and the Soviets have started moving toward this more simple, more basic formulation?

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SECRETARY KISSINGER: Well, I think it is hard to answer this in the abstract. I think it is probably fair to say that we are moving towards simplicity, yes, but that is a very relative concept.

Q Do you have any limit on the amount of time you will devote to the SALT and how much time are you prepared to spend on the Middle East?

SECRETARY KISSINGER: These meetings are not clocked and both of the principals are fairly gregarious and easy-going, so you get into a topic and it runs and we are not leaving on a scheduled airliner or from a regular airport. So, we will talk about the Middle East as long as either side has something to say about it. There is no fixed time. We are prepared to discuss it.

Q In that connection, Mr. Secretary, you also said that you would take advantage in the negotiations, of the momentum that has built up. Are you building up the kind of momentum now that would require the benefit from the additional time here? Do you feel pressured -- the fact that we are sitting here at 2 o'clock in the morning -- against some kind of a deadline?

SECRETARY KISSINGER: No, because we don't have anything that we must finish here. We didn't come here to make an agreement. We are not going to make an agreement here. We have come here principally, as I said before we left, for the two leaders to have an opportunity to get to know each other and to review Soviet-American relations, hopefully to give some impetus to the SALT negotiations. That probably will be achieved.

Beyond that, we have no necessity -- no intention, in fact, to reach any specific agreements because, after all, the two principals are going to meet again for a much more extended summit when the General Secretary visits the United States in the spring.

Q Mr. Secretary, why haven't the two principals met alone, President Ford and Brezhnev?

SECRETARY KISSINGER: They will certainly meet alone before the end of the visit here.

THE PRESS: Thank you, Mr. Secretary.

END (AT 2:00 A.M. U.S.S.R. Time)