

MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE  
WASHINGTON

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E.O. 12958 Sec. 3.6

SECRET/SENSITIVE

MR 01-100836; PL 22 10/1/01

By det NARA, Date 10/24/01

MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

PARTICIPANTS: President Ford  
 Henry A. Kissinger, Secretary of State  
 Donald Rumsfeld, Secretary of Defense  
 George Bush, Director, CIA  
 Fred Ikle, ACDA  
 Nelson Rockefeller, Vice President

DATE & TIME: Thursday, March 18, 1976

PLACE: The Oval Office

SUBJECT: Soviet Note on SALT of March 17, 1976

President: Most of you know I feel strongly that I think a good SALT treaty is in the national interest. But this note [Tab A] raises the possibility -- if we pursue our present course -- that we will be forced to suspend the talks for 1976.

Vice President: Their flat statement about Backfire raises the prospect that there is nothing to discuss. I am impressed by the feeling on the Hill that we can be tough with them.

Rumsfeld: Another approach would be procedural: ask them what they would propose to do now. Another approach would be to leave it in Geneva; another would be to defer until next year. Another approach would be a Brezhnev visit without SALT. These are illustrative.

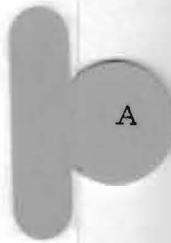
President: I think this note deserves careful thought.



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CLASSIFIED BY Henry A. Kissinger  
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 SCHEDULE OF EXECUTIVE ORDER 11652  
 EXEMPTION CATEGORY 5 (B) (3)  
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A



March 17, 1976

8:15 p.m.

Dear Mr. President,

I and my colleagues have thoroughly studied the considerations set forth in your letter of February 16, 1976 about current situation in the relations between our countries.

It appears that we and you are evaluating in different way the causes of certain difficulties which cropped up into these relations lately. We have already expounded to you our point of view on that matter. It remains the same. It is important, however, that both you and we stand for overcoming the existing difficulties, for further improvement of the Soviet-American relations.

On our part we do not feel any hesitations in choosing the path. It was very recently stated at the highest forum of our country - the 25th Congress of the CPSU that the Soviet Union intends firmly to continue the course for further improving Soviet-American relations in strict compliance with the spirit and letter of the concluded agreements and the undertaken commitments.

We definitely proceed from the assumption that there objectively exist necessary prerequisites that, granted mutual desire, the relations between our countries should continue to be developed and strengthened in the interests of our two peoples and the cause of world peace.

In this connection we as well as you, Mr. President, attach to priority to an early conclusion of working out and signing a long-term agreement on the whole complex of questions of limiting strategic weapons on the basis of the agreement reached between us in Vladivostok.

In the course of the talks already after Vladivostok - and you, certainly know it well - the Soviet side took a number of important steps to meet the American side in attempts to find mutually acceptable resolutions to the remaining issues.

Unfortunately, the same cannot be said about the position of the American side including the latest proposals which you call compromise ones in your letter.

Let us, however, look whether they are really of such nature.

It is known that in meeting the wishes of the American side we expressed readiness to count as MIRVed missiles (1320 units) all missiles of the types which have been tested with MIRV, under condition that simultaneously agreement would be reached on the whole complex of cruise missiles. Up till now the American side as well agreed to that.

Yet now the American side proposes to consider as agreed only the first question - about the way of counting MIRVed missiles putting it in long-term agreement while leaving under the terms of these proposals actually unresolved the question of sea-based and land-based cruise missiles.

True, you propose that missiles of these two types should not be operationally deployed until January 1, 1979, but their production and testing would not be banned. But let us speak frankly - actually it would be a sanctioning of a new channel of strategic arms race because it is unrealistic to think that it would be easier to agree on banning long-range cruise missiles after they have been developed and, possibly, even put into mass production and not now when it hasn't happened yet.

Trying to remove from limiting these really strategic types of weapons the American side at the same time attempts as before to put limitation of some kind on Soviet medium-range bomber which it calls "Backfire" and which is in no way related to the subject of the negotiations. The artificial character of including this issue into agenda and persistency shown by the American side in that matter cannot but bring inference that someone is deliberately trying to put roadblocks on the way to reaching an agreement.

Thus we do not see any forward movement in the US proposals of February 16 in comparison with what was discussed during Secretary Kissinger's visit to Moscow last January. Moreover, there is a certain movement backward. It first of all applies to a linked solution of the questions of MIRVed missiles and cruise missiles, which I have mentioned above. Further, the US side agreed in January with the complete ban on submarine cruise missiles with the range over 600 km. and now it backed away from this agreement.

So, can one consider, Mr. President, such proposals as compromise ones?

I am saying this with all directness, because in such serious business one cannot leave any ambiguities.

We believe that the proposals which we set forth at the conclusion of the talks with Mr. Kissinger in Moscow constitute the realistic basis for solving the remaining issues of strategic arms limitations which are not yet agreed upon, and we hope that the US side would once again thoroughly weigh them from that very point of view.

There remain not so many unresolved issues, and if energetic efforts are taken for settling them the work on the Agreement can be completed within a very short period of time, which both sides are equally interested in.

In conclusion, I would like to reemphasize that in our deep conviction we can and must provide - proceeding from what has already been accomplished in Soviet-American relations and not succumbing to influences of various momentary considerations - for onward movement across the wide field of those relations.

Sincerely,

L. BREZHNEV

March 17, 1976

\*Have Dechett bring out table with it.

P/K/R/Burch/Dble/UP

15 Mar 76

(incomplete)

P Most of you know I feel strongly that I think a good Salt treaty is in a real interest. But this raises a possibility - if we pursue our present course - that we will be forced to suspend talks for 1976.

VP This flat statement about Backline raises a prospect that there is nothing to discuss. I am impressed by your feeling on Hill that we can be tough w/ them.

R Another approach could be procedural - ask them <sup>What</sup> they would prefer to do now; another could be to demand in Geneva; another to defer until next year; another could be a Big meet w/o Salt. These are illustrative

P I think this note deserves careful thought.

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AUTHORITY per ml 01-100 #36

BY Wb NLF, DATE 6/18/04

