

MEETING WITH FOREIGN  
MINISTER GROMYKO

Friday, September 20, 1974

11:00 a. m.

THE PRESIDENT HAS SEEN...

~~TOP SECRET/SENSITIVE/EXCLUSIVELY EYES ONLY~~

MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

DATE: September 20, 1974

TIME: 11:10 a.m.

PLACE: Oval Room, White House

SUBJECT: Soviet Foreign Minister Gromyko's Call  
on President Ford

PARTICIPANTS:

Soviet Side

Foreign Minister Gromyko  
Ambassador Dobrynin  
Mr. Sukhodrev (Interpreter)

U.S. Side

The President  
Secretary Kissinger  
Ambassador Stoessel

The President: It is very nice to have you here, Mr. Foreign Minister, so that we can get better acquainted and can talk about serious things.

Gromyko: First, let's agree that half of the conversation will be through the interpreter. I don't need an interpreter when you speak, but I will speak through an interpreter. Let's also agree -- since we have a number of questions to exchange views on -- to take them up one after the other. Of course, we can comment as we wish on each question.

The President: That sounds fine.

~~TOP SECRET/SENSITIVE/EXCLUSIVELY EYES ONLY~~

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By LHC NARA, Date 11/19/09

CLASSIFIED BY HENRY A. KISSINGER

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Gromyko: First, I would like to begin by transmitting to you, Mr. President, the greetings and best wishes of Leonid Brezhnev, the General Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union.

The President: Thank you. I was very grateful for his message and I look forward to meeting him.

Gromyko: Yes, I agree that the message was good and that it sheds light on the general situation with regard to relations between our two countries. I hope you noticed the evidence in that message of the permanency of our line of policy toward the US.

In connection with the changes which took place in the US leadership, we asked ourselves within our leadership -- and this was true personally of Mr. Brezhnev -- whether the US would hold to its line of policy toward the Soviet Union which it had adopted in recent years or whether there would be some changes. I should add that we noted your message, Mr. President, to Leonid Brezhnev, and your public statements, and we came to the conclusion that your line aimed at detente and improving relations with the Soviet Union probably will not change. I would appreciate it if you could confirm this.

Regarding our own policy, it remains as it has been with regard to US-Soviet relations. This has been expressed in the joint documents approved by our two countries and is aimed at achieving detente in our relations.

The Secretary: Mr. President, you may have noted that the Foreign Minister said our line "probably will not change." He is not a man given to rash statements. (The Secretary recalled an incident which took place last year at the UN Secretary General's dinner for the Security Council.) Sometime, I would like to hear one unqualified statement from Mr. Gromyko. He has a diabolical ability to phrase double negatives. I'm too obvious about this, but he is not.

The President: As Ambassador Dobrynin and his predecessor knew, I was a hardliner in Congress in 1949. But I want to emphasize that, as our new relations developed under the label of detente, and as I became acquainted with the benefits of this policy to our two countries and to the whole world, I changed my views. I want to assure you, Mr. Foreign Minister, that I will continue the policy of President Nixon. You noted correctly that in my speech to the Congress I emphasized my support of this policy and I wish to reiterate that. I thought it would never be possible to develop it, but I support it. It has

been very effectively developed by Secretary Kissinger and we will continue this.

I don't have to tell you that we are most fortunate to have Henry Kissinger as Secretary of State. He has convinced me about our policy toward the Soviet Union and of the importance of building on the new relationship. I feel we have a good basis on which to build and good prospects for the future. You should know that my relations with Secretary Kissinger are close and I back him fully.

Gromyko: I have listened to your statement with satisfaction, Mr. President. It is quite natural that what interests us first and foremost is the political line of US policy toward the Soviet Union. We consider this most important; it is the soul of the relations between our two countries. We've seen ups and downs over many years -- over 50 years -- and we have experienced periods of lessening of tensions and of increasing tensions. However, in the last several years, we have noted that our relations have evened out and have shown more stability. It is not that we are on a smooth, paved road; maybe there will be problems in the future in connection with our assessments of the phenomena of political life, but it is true to say that what has

happened in our relations is historic and has never happened before. Of course, we worked together in World War II, but this was a special period. The level of our relations which we have achieved is of paramount importance, especially considering the role we two great powers are destined to play in the world. Therefore, we can only hear your statement with pleasure. If this line indeed will be observed, then we can look with confidence toward the future.

The President: Our line will continue from our point of view, and I gather the same is true from your point of view. We won't be able to solve all problems. As you know, we have some difficulties domestically in the United States about our policy, but, over-all, our people feel that our policy toward the Soviet Union and our relationship with you have been beneficial. I feel the American people will support me in this policy.

Gromyko: Now I would like to go to some concrete problems. As you know, the Soviet Union and the United States on several occasions have emphasized the significance of restraint in regard to the arms race. This is a big problem involving the military and security interests of both sides. In recent years, this problem has been a central issue between the US and the Soviet Union. It



has attracted the attention not just of our peoples in general but also the leadership on both sides. It is regarded as the most topical and the most important of the problems between us.

Much has been done in regard to this question already. You of course are familiar with the accords which have been reached between us. They are important for our two countries and also for the world. I want to say that our interest in finding ways to solve this problem has not lessened.

You probably have heard of our statements made at various levels, and especially at the highest level, on this subject, particularly in connection with the high-level US-Soviet meetings. We believe that serious efforts are required to achieve agreement where this has not yet been achieved. This means that all possible preparations should be made for further agreements, in particular to replace the Interim Agreement in the period after 1977.

We know you are working on this question. Talks took place between Secretary Kissinger and General Secretary Brezhnev and also on the highest level at the last summit meeting. We are ready and fully determined to move forward to find common grounds for an agreement on this major problem.

This is a complex question and I am sure you also are aware of the complexity. It affects the fundamental interests and security of both the US and the Soviet Union. Therefore, the work which must be done must be detailed and subtle; it will take patience and a broad outlook to find a solution acceptable to both countries.

In discussing this, I don't plan to set forth any detailed scheme or numbers. I don't know if you have such details either; if you did, we would gladly hear them. But I wish to emphasize the need for both sides to prepare thoroughly. Any agreement must take into account on an equal basis the interests of both sides so that there will be no harm to the security of either side. This is the cornerstone of any agreement in this field. If this is observed, then there will be a good chance of finding agreement.

I want to express our determination to continue and to redouble our efforts to find a solution on those aspects of the problems where there has not yet been a solution. We will do everything possible to find such a solution. We hope the US will act in the same way.

We know that you have various shades of opinion in the US on this subject. This is obvious to anyone who reads the press. It is you, Mr. President, who must bring all of this down to a common denominator. It is



for you to decide. We know that we are dealing with the President of the United States. We assume the US will be guided by the principle of equal security for both sides. This must be the basis for any agreement, that neither side will be harmed by an agreement.

I don't want to go into more detail at this time on this subject. There are many factors to be taken into account. One of them is geography. Also, so far there are only two of us dealing with this subject. You and we can talk and try to find an agreement, but other states are sitting and watching us. There are some who criticize one or the other of us, and some don't even like either side. This complicates the situation.

We could be pessimistic or fatalistic about the outcome, but we are not. We believe there is the possibility of an agreement which would be acceptable to both sides.

The President: There is no diminution on our side of the desire to make progress. We want to double and re-double our efforts. We feel we can handle the problem of the Interim Agreement and achieve a longer term agreement.

I'm in the process of working with the Secretary and others to determine a position which will be safe for both countries yet will be aimed at reducing the

problem of destabilization which would occur if both of us went down the path of developing more arms.

As you know, Secretary Kissinger will be going to Moscow.

The Secretary: They don't seem to want me -- they can't agree on a date. Sometime around the end of October or early November seems probable.

Gromyko: We do want him!

The President: I hope he can lay the foundation for a longer term agreement which can be worked out in the course of the next 12 months.

I am faced with a domestic problem. I feel the US people want real progress on the arms question. If I didn't feel that we could make progress, my actions regarding the military budget which I must submit in December would be different. But I am reassured by what you say, Mr. Foreign Minister, and my recommendations to Congress will be different. If I were disappointed in your position, I would have to take a stronger line. But on the basis of your assurances and the prospects of progress, it will be easier for me to convince the US Congress and the people that we can get results.



The Secretary: And, of course, much will depend on what we can accomplish in Moscow in October.

The President: Yes, as well as in the arms negotiations. I have to think of dollar appropriations and details. If Henry comes back from Moscow with concrete results, it will be most important and helpful.

Gromyko: On both sides, let us give earnest thought to this. We should endeavor to get a longer term agreement, at least to 1985. This could ease the situation and would help in considering variants of a solution; this is why we agreed to this approach at the last summit.

At some point, all of this must be reduced to concrete figures. This is a crucial and topical issue. It is of paramount importance that the principle of no harm to the security of either side will be observed closely.

We'll be prepared to discuss all of this in detail with Secretary Kissinger in Moscow.

The Secretary: Mr. President, I've told Ambassador Dobrynin on your behalf of our general approach. We will discuss a rough order of magnitude. It is conceivable that you and the General Secretary could then announce this in Vladivostok when you meet toward the end of November. Then, when Mr. Brezhnev comes



here next June an agreement could be concluded. This could also fit into your Congressional schedule. Before you go to Vladivostok there would be concrete progress going beyond general statements. This would anchor the policy in the public mind before rational debate becomes difficult in the period preceding the 1976 elections.

The President: That is correct. It would be better to achieve an agreement in a non-election year. If we could achieve it in May or June, based on Dr. Kissinger's trip and my own meeting, then it would be out of the political arena.

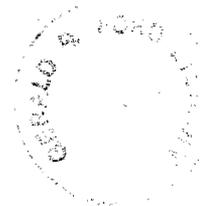
The Secretary: Practically speaking, we won't have an agreement in June unless there is agreement in principle in November.

On two occasions, we've attempted to achieve rapid agreement on SALT. This is too difficult a procedure. If we can't get an agreement in principle, then we can't get agreement in 1975.

The President: And we can't get it in 1976.

The Secretary: Those are the realities.

Gromyko: It follows from what the President and the Secretary have said that we must seriously try to find a solution. We are prepared to do this and we trust the



US is also. If, before my departure from the US, you have any more details to offer -- some kind of preliminary material for discussion -- we would hear them with interest. This would facilitate consideration of the matter before the Secretary comes to Moscow.

The Secretary: Maybe we could discuss this next Tuesday night at dinner in a very preliminary way. This would be just a concept.

Gromyko: What we need is something material, which can be touched.

The Secretary: You see, Mr. President, he's on his good behavior!

I have told the President, Mr. Foreign Minister, that you are a man of great ability, a tough negotiator, but also completely reliable.

The President: And also that you are the best professional in the business.

Gromyko: Now I would like to touch on European affairs, including European security. Much has been done by the US and the Soviet Union acting together with regard to policy concerning Europe.

The President: I agree. I also feel there are areas

where we could make more progress, but please proceed.

Gromyko: There was a time in the history of our relations when we were partners in a joint struggle against the aggressor and we shed blood for a common cause. This is imbedded in human memory and always will be. Now, we have reached a level which shows the advantage of cooperation between the Soviet Union and the US in connection with European security in our own interest and in the general interest of other countries. This should not be weakened in any way and nothing should be allowed to disturb this. We feel that together we can do much more which would entirely meet the interests of strengthening European security and improving our own relations.

First, about the conference on European security and the successful completion of its work with positive results. As you know, the second stage is now in progress in Geneva. I would like to say, for the Soviet leadership and for Leonid Brezhnev personally, that we attach great importance to finishing the work of the conference with positive results.

However, we see some artificial and unjustified delays in the conference. We feel that the completion of the conference, and especially holding the third phase at the highest level, would give a new impulse to security in Europe as well as to US-Soviet relations.

We know that some say that the US and the Soviets are acting together in unison. Even if people do say this, we don't feel we should give up our cooperation or sacrifice the advantages which could accrue from such cooperation.

Secretary Kissinger can confirm that when we have reached an agreement and find a common language, then things move forward as a rule. But when we don't have agreement, then there is no progress, and we go in circles.

Lately, there have been some hitches in our cooperation in Geneva. We ask ourselves whether this means a change in US policy about what has been agreed or whether this is a chance occurrence. We would like to work for a successful completion of the conference with good results. We would like to urge you to cooperate with the Soviet Union to bring the conference to a successful conclusion. We have many other things to do after the conference and we want to get to them.

The Secretary: I think Ambassador Dobrynin has a microphone in our office!;

The President: When I said that we could do more, I had in mind the security conference and also the force reduction talks. I feel we can work together even better than we did in the war. I am not familiar with the

difficulties you mentioned at Geneva, although I know there are some problems about Basket III.

The Secretary: I will talk at lunch with the Foreign Minister about this. The trouble, Mr. President, is with our European allies. Speaking very frankly, every country wants to extract something from the Soviet Union. I've told all of them that the Soviet Union won't be overthrown without noticing it, and certainly not because of things like increased circulation of newspapers and so on. I don't know how many projects have been submitted in Basket III, but there is a big pile. We've tried to reduce that and to explain to our allies that the Soviet Union has difficulty in making concessions on one issue when it doesn't know what else it may be asked to concede on.

We've had enormous difficulties with our friends to get one document; now they are going through all of the projects and reading them. There is no deliberate policy on our part to slow down the conference. We remain on the course as we discussed it at the summit.

This whole thing is one of the wierdest negotiations I have ever seen. I talked with one foreign minister in Europe and said we needed one position. I didn't care what it was, but we needed one position. He objected that the Russians would find out about it. But, of

course, that's the point -- we want them to!

We do need more flexibility from the Soviet side, but I also see the Foreign Minister's problem. He has to know what he is dealing with.

Gromyko: Two or three issues at Geneva have become barriers which have not yet been surmounted.

First is the inviolability of frontiers. We have been in agreement with the US on this going back to the time of Kennedy. Of course, Roosevelt's position on this was known. At the conference in Geneva, everyone agreed on one formula. But lately, we have heard that some don't like this formula and we have heard that the US wanted to change it.

The Secretary: That's not true!

Gromyko: We should talk further about this matter.

Second is the question of military movements. Some countries want us to build a great accounting house and to devote all of our efforts to this so that when one division moves from one place to another we can report on it, as if we had nothing else to do. What does this have to do with security in the present day -- what does this contribute to confidence? Initially, we knew Secretary Kissinger's position on this, but at Geneva, unfortunately, the voice of the

US has not been heard. I repeat, that the movement of one or two divisions from one point to another does not affect the real security of a country.

I think the US is under pressure from Luxembourg on this.

The Secretary: We see you are being pressed by Bulgaria!

Gromyko: A country like West Germany, for obvious reasons, is cautious on this and other similar questions. However, they say that we might solve this question with a voluntary exchange of observers on the basis of reciprocity. The Germans mentioned this to me in Bonn in passing.

To conclude on this point, we hope we can work more closely together and achieve greater mutual understanding at the conference.

The Secretary: On the security conference, I would say, first, that you have to be a Talmudic student to understand it. On the question of the inviolability of frontiers, this is a German issue and not a problem for the US. Following the change of government in Germany -- in which Eastern Europe was not totally uninvolved -- they asked for a change. We gave two versions to you but didn't get an answer.

On troop movements, the issue is the size of the

unit and the area. It is no secret that our means of information are better than those of our allies.

Gromyko: We proceed from that assumption.

The Secretary: This is primarily a European problem. We don't know what the Germans said to you. If they come to us there will be no problem. I have had instructions from the President to work on the basis of our previous understanding.

The President: That is right. There is no change in our policy. The lack of progress on Basket III seems to be holding things up.

The Secretary: If we could get something on these other points, it might help on Basket III.

Gromyko: On Basket III, I have always favored shaking some things out of the basket, but I believe the issues essentially have been resolved.

The Secretary: Some of our allies have to show that they have extorted from you what you already have agreed to.

Gromyko: Now about the reduction of forces and the Vienna talks. This is a very important issue. You agree that it is complicated and we feel it is, too. Its solution obviously requires time and I feel our efforts

should continue. But we believe the Western participants must give up the idea of some kind of a common ceiling for forces on both sides. Some say they don't like Soviet tanks in Europe. They say there are too many of them and that we should withdraw a full tank division. We should take 1700 out.

The Secretary: I'm for it!

Gromyko: The Western participants say we should reduce our forces twice as much as reductions on the Western side. But they refuse to reduce their air force, nuclear arms and bases in Western Europe. We could demand that these be removed, but we don't take that approach.

We should scrupulously observe the principle of no harm to the security of either side and we should preserve the co-relation of forces in Western Europe today.

We favor a reduction of armed forces and armaments in Central Europe. We should go in this direction. We should make the best effort we can.

The Western participants say that only the US and Soviets should reduce and the others should be left as they are. Reductions for them would come in the indefinite future in a second phase. There is nothing precise about this and no figures are given. Everything will be subject to negotiations.

We should think more about all of this. Perhaps in

the next meeting with Secretary Kissinger we could try to find a new approach to the whole problem which would serve our common interests.

The President: As I recall, we offered to take out 29,000; you should take out 68,000. I also recall that the Soviet Union talked in terms of a 5% reduction.

The Secretary: The Soviet Union has gone through an evolution on this point. In the Brezhnev-Nixon meeting in 1973, Brezhnev proposed a rapid 5% reduction to get things started. Since then, the Soviet position has evolved in a more complicated way.

Gromyko: Brezhnev's suggestion did not constitute a broad program of action. It covered only a partial aspect. It was an illustration of the possible dimension of a first step involving US and Soviet forces.

If the US and Soviet sides reduce, it won't help if the others increase their forces.

The Secretary: But the Foreign Minister knows that if we reduce, there must be a ceiling on the forces of the others. Whatever either of us reduces cannot be replaced by increases by the others.

Gromyko: It is not enough to talk about US-Soviet



reductions and a concurrent freeze of the others. We should agree on a definite stage for the reduction of the forces of the other countries.

Also, a first step reduction of US-Soviet forces with concurrent conditions poses very complicated problems. In subsequent meetings we should discuss this.

The Secretary: The President met with Stanley Resor on Saturday and you can also read what I said in my testimony yesterday. It is hard to attest to the success of detente if armed forces are always going up.

All of this really doesn't make much difference in practical terms. However, we are looking at new approaches.

Gromyko: Your argument works both ways.

The President: I am glad you brought this question up. We are interested in new approaches and this is something we should discuss later.

Gromyko: About the Middle East. Our concern about events there has been rising lately. We are apprehensive that the present period might be a prelude to a flare up of fighting. It would be useful if we could coordinate our efforts. We know that the US doesn't always take a positive view in practice of our suggestions for cooperation. But we are realists. We want a firm peace in the Middle East and neither of us should fear coordination of our efforts.

Concretely we would be grateful if you could give us answers to two questions.

First, how does the United States Government now assess the situation in the Middle East? Should the Arab countries continue to be occupied or should Israel withdraw?

Secondly, about Palestine. Does the US recognize the just Palestinian aspirations for their own national statehood? I don't want to discuss where this might be.

We've both acknowledged the need for our two countries to cooperate. The Middle East constitutes a big problem which affects our relations. Your comments would be of significance for the meeting in Vladivostok and for Secretary Kissinger's talks in Moscow.

The President: It is obvious that we both have an interest in resolving the issues which have arisen in the Middle East. Both of us have tried to prevent or solve the problems there in the past. What we have to do in order to work together is to receive concrete views from you about how to solve specific problems. For example, between Israel and Jordan, between Israel and Syria, or the Palestinian question.

If we are to work together, we need your concrete suggestions so that we can then decide how to approach a solution of these problems.

In this kind of exchange today I don't want to go into details about frontier lines or about Palestine. Dr. Kissinger can get into these matters. On Palestine, of course, there is the problem of the Palestinian view versus the Jordanian view.

Our assessment of the situation is that it could be very serious. It could erupt. We will use our maximum influence to prevent this. We will welcome working more closely with you to this end. To solve the territorial problems and to recognize the rights of others, we need something more concrete from you.

Gromyko: Thank you for your comments. The problem is really a very serious one and I hope we will be able to discuss it later with Dr. Kissinger. I favor continued cooperation with the US in this matter. We don't quite understand why the US is reticent about cooperation with the Soviet Union in the Middle East. We feel it would be in the interest of both our countries. Also, we can't retreat from our position of principle about the complete withdrawal of Israel from occupied lands.

As far as Israel itself is concerned, we have said many times we favor the continued existence of Israel as a sovereign state with all possible guarantees. We are prepared to participate in such guarantees together with the US, or under the Security Council.

Now I would like to say something about two questions which are quite different and about which we would like to hear your views.

First, on the question of trade and MFN. We value your efforts and those of Secretary Kissinger very highly in this regard. This is the view of our entire leadership and of Leonid Brezhnev personally. We would like to know how you assess the situation and the prospects.

Secondly, we have noted your statements and the statements of others that the US favors detente and that things are moving in this direction. However, you also have said that the US must be second to none and must be first in armed strength. Frankly, this puzzles us. We could take the same position and say we want to be first. It is obvious that if we claim to be first there will be no end to the race. We believe the logic of things should persuade us not to give impetus to the arms race. We feel that the interests of the US and the Soviet Union are best served by restraint, restraint and more restraint until the time when we can turn back the arms race altogether. We feel that a continuation of the arms race is against your line and by and large against Secretary Kissinger's statement.

The Secretary: That is the highest praise!

Gromyko: We feel that we should try gradually and steadily to eliminate the arms race.

The President: What you have said emphasizes the need for negotiations on arms. This will be discussed by Secretary Kissinger when he goes to Moscow, in Vladivostok and also here in 1975.

The statements I have made about the US position should be understood in terms of the US domestic situation. But we have a complete and total dedication to the objective of limiting the arms race.

On the Trade Bill, I've worked with Senator Jackson and Secretary Kissinger has done so also. The Trade Bill is ready for agreement if we find a parliamentary method by which we can be sure that Congress cannot delay or easily destroy what we want -- MFN. The struggle is between the Congress and the President. The Congress wants more control.

I was rather disappointed with our talk this morning with Senator Jackson. We made some progress, but not enough. We made a proposition which is reasonable. He also made a proposal, but we cannot accept it. He said he would consider the matter and we hope we will have something by Monday. We will keep on trying.

We need the most firm assurances on emigration, such as have been given through Ambassador Dobrynin. I am convinced by the words of Mr. Brezhnev. Our problem is to convince the members of Congress who have less faith than I do.

Ambassador Dobrynin: Some figures on emigration have been mentioned in the press. This never was mentioned in our discussions.

The Secretary: I want to discuss this further at lunch. I've never given any figures to the Senators.

Briefly, Mr. President, to recapitulate our understanding: it is understood that, on the Soviet side, there will be no restrictions on applications for emigration; there will be no harrassment, and there will be no restrictions on exit visas except for reasons of national security. If all these conditions are met, then everything will depend on the number of applications. The Soviet Union has no responsibility to produce applicants. If 100,000 apply, then 99,000 will get out. If 9,000 apply, then 8,000 will get out. We have made all of this clear to the Senators.

You told me this, Mr. Foreign Minister, in Moscow and in Geneva. There have been no new concessions on your part. The Senators can think anything they want about numbers, but this has not been discussed with them.

Gromyko: Are you hopeful?

The Secretary: Yes, I think we'll work this out sooner or later.

The President: I didn't give an inch to Jackson this morning.

Gromyko: Mr. President, I appreciate very much the time you have given to me this morning. Also, I should tell you that I appreciated your statement at the UN, particularly your words about detente and cooperation with the Soviet Union.

The President: I meant every word.

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The meeting ended at 1:30 p.m.

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