

MEMORANDUM

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By WZ NARA, Date 3/20/12

MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

PARTICIPANTS: Andrei A. Gromyko, Minister of Foreign Affairs
of the USSR
Viktor Sukhodrev, Interpreter

Henry A. Kissinger, Secretary of State
Peter W. Rodman, NSC Staff *PMR*

TIME AND DATE: Tuesday, February 5, 1974
12:00 - 1:15 p.m.

PLACE: The Soviet Embassy
Washington, D.C.

SUBJECTS: The Middle East; Berlin; Europe; Viet-Nam;
Kissinger Trip

[The Secretary arrived at 12:00 and was ushered upstairs to meet Foreign Minister Gromyko and Ambassador Dobrynin. The Ambassador then left. There was a brief photo opportunity. Then brandy was served.]

Gromyko: [to Viktor]: Armenian brandy?

Sukhodrev: Yes.

Gromyko: Just a short time ago I visited the Armenian Republic.

Kissinger: It is very good. It is one of the places I would most like to visit.

Gromyko: Leningrad too.

Kissinger: I will never see Leningrad!

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Gromyko: It is, as they say in diplomatic words, a guarantee.

Kissinger: I will never see it! Although it is better to see it in the summer. Once when I went as a tourist, I saw it in February. It was colder. It was impressive -- and very sinister.

Gromyko: Very impressive.

Kissinger: And also very sinister.

Gromyko: It was described by Dostoevsky. What is called the White Nights.

The Middle East

Kissinger: Let us talk about the Middle East.

Gromyko: All right.

Kissinger: We are in principle prepared for coordinated action. What we would like to do is also ask the opinion -- which I am sure will be favorable -- of the Syrians, and the Israelis -- they won't be favorable -- and the Egyptians. In fairness we should ask their view. But we will tell them we are prepared in principle for coordinated action.

Gromyko: What do you mean by "agreed in principle?"

Kissinger: That we inform each other, and act in coordination, and when appropriate, that we act jointly.

Gromyko: "When appropriate?"

Kissinger: In Jerusalem, it would not be. For example, if -- or when -- you go to the Middle East, I will not come along.

Gromyko: The crux of the matter is not in who can or cannot go to a certain place or city, because I have had a repeated invitation to visit Egypt, Syria, Algeria. That is not a matter of principle.

Kissinger: No.



Gromyko: But if I go I will say that all matters pertaining to the Middle East must be discussed by Egypt, Syria, the Soviet Union, the United States, Jordan. What you will say, I don't know. But that is the issue -- that is the line.

Kissinger: I am prepared to say that. The only qualification -- I have no reason to think it will arise -- is if Syria or Israel say they don't want these discussions. Israel you have no diplomatic relations with.

Gromyko: In theory that is a possibility, but I doubt it will happen.

Kissinger: I do too.

Gromyko: But you should set out your own opinion, which is that all these questions should be discussed by all parties. Let the parties say that all these questions should be discussed. We [the Soviet Union] always say that we will discuss on a bilateral basis between us. Always we stress this -- the U.S., Egypt, Syria, Jordan.

_____ May I say this when I go to Moscow?

Kissinger: Yes.

Gromyko: It is a question of confidence.

Kissinger: Yes. We will do it in consultation with the Soviet Union. I am telling you this.

Gromyko: Consultation, and as far as the settlement of the question, a joint understanding?

Kissinger: Yes.

It means that both sides have to show understanding. Taking rigid positions will complicate the situation. I told you this.

What we don't want is for you to wind up as the lawyer of the Arabs and we wind up as the lawyer of Israel. We should act in a common interest. If you keep telling the Arabs "We are more for you than the Americans," then we have to protect our interests. But if we both show a general understanding, it will not arise.



Gromyko: This by no means implies that I will say, for example tomorrow, that we agree fifty percent with the Arabs and fifty percent with Israel.

Kissinger: No, no.

Gromyko: Obviously there will be cases on which we have greater sympathy with one side, and occasions when we have sympathy with the other side. And that goes for you, too. But we should strive for a mutual understanding; that is what the Geneva Conference is all about.

Kissinger: What about your relations with Israel?

Gromyko: Do you seriously believe that a normalization of our relations, or the achievement of more normal relations, will be helpful?

Kissinger: Yes, I do.

Gromyko: From the point of view of our purely domestic situation, up to now our public opinion is certainly unprepared for anything of that kind, for the material implementation of that idea. Lately the situation, the unilateral actions of the U.S., has not created conditions conducive to that idea. So I cannot now say anything definite on the situation in that regard. If we did, the Arabs might -- may -- be certainly very critical of us, and that would complicate the situation for both of us.

As regards your advice, we will certainly take it into account and I will talk to the General Secretary about this. I will tell him your opinion. But there certainly should be some substantial advance in the Middle East situation. So it is hard indeed to give a positive response now to that question. I am sure you understand our position.

Kissinger: But it would help joint action. Because up to now only we can act in Israel.

Gromyko: Up to now nothing was done with joint action.

Kissinger: Let's take the case of Syria, which is the acute issue now. The Syrians have made a proposal. Like every first Arab proposal, it did not extend itself in the direction of taking account of the Israeli point of view. It won't be acceptable. I think they know that. But let's not worry about that. The Israelis will not negotiate without the lists of prisoners and Red Cross visits. They don't want their release, just the lists and visits. It is hard to say it is an unreasonable requirement.



Gromyko: What is the reaction of the Syrians?

Kissinger: Up to now they have refused.

I have told the Israelis that maybe the Syrians are afraid that after they give the lists there would be no plan from the Israelis. But I can assure you they will give me a plan. I have not seen it; I do not have it. But after they get the lists they will give me a plan.

Gromyko: If we agree on joint action, we should discuss it.

Kissinger: That is no problem. When I have something we will discuss it.

Gromyko: You can discuss it with our Ambassador here. He will be going away but you can discuss it with the Charge [Vorontsov].

Kissinger: Is he informed?

Gromyko: He is. He will be, in the course of the negotiations.

Kissinger: That is the only solution. Our Ambassador [Stoessel] will not be there until the 17th. But we have confidence in him. That is why he was selected.

Gromyko: With regard to Syria, everything should be taken up and discussed through the application of this method, and everything that arises should be considered in the framework of the Geneva Conference. If something is discussed on a bilateral basis, even this should be considered as in the framework of the Geneva Conference. If something should come up on a higher level, we should not exclude that you and I could come to Geneva and look it over.

Kissinger: We don't exclude that.

What we will resist -- so there is no misunderstanding -- is if we think you are trying to drive us in the direction of the Arabs. You have not done this.

Gromyko: We have not.

Kissinger: No.



Gromyko: And vice versa. We should not try to trip each other up.

Kissinger: Yes.

When the talks themselves take place, the Syrians want us to do it all. It cannot be done. The Syrians have to talk to the Israelis. They can do it as a part of the Egyptian delegation. But we cannot do the whole negotiation.

And when the Syrians and Israelis talk, we think for the sake of the Israelis it is better that a UN man be present but our two ambassadors should be in the closest contact. I will send Bunker there and he will be in touch with Vinogradov.

Gromyko: I don't understand this. We just agree on something and now you say Israel and Syria will talk and our ambassadors just talk.

Kissinger: They will exchange ideas.

Gromyko: It is not the same.

Kissinger: Because of their [the Israelis'] mistrust of you.

Gromyko: Are they worried about security? How many nuclear weapons do they have?

Kissinger: After diplomatic relations.

Gromyko: How can we do it with such an attitude of theirs?

We cannot understand. Such an approach is contrary to the readiness to have a normalization of relations. Without something positive, our public and our leadership could not accept. And to discuss within the framework of the Conference we agreed on, this cannot be.

Kissinger: I have to discuss it with them.

Gromyko: Then discuss it with them. If you inform us, we would appreciate it.

Kissinger: I will inform you in a couple of days.



Gromyko: I was a neighbor of the Israelis at Geneva. But not to have meetings -- what secrets do they have?

Kissinger: It is not a question of secrets, because presumably the Syrians would tell you everything that was discussed.

Gromyko: It is a question of confidence. Certainly some degree of confidence should exist between the participants, even Israel and the Soviet Union. We are pleased knowing about the reaction in Israel to our statement at the Geneva Conference. They interpreted it correctly.

Kissinger: It was a favorable reaction. Under what conditions would diplomatic relations be reestablished?

Gromyko: When there is substantive advance toward a settlement of the substance of the problem.

Kissinger: Would you consider a Syrian disengagement agreement a substantive advance?

Gromyko: It must be a living process, not a dead process. They say: "We don't even want to be present with Soviet representatives." This I will tell my colleagues.

Kissinger: You can tell your colleagues that if there is a reestablishment of diplomatic relations, then they will be present.

Gromyko: I will not repeat the old story about the horse and cart. Israel doesn't want to discuss the problem in the framework of the Geneva Conference in the presence of the Soviet Union. My colleagues would regard it as an insult; I personally would regard it as an insult.

Kissinger: We will discuss it with them.

Gromyko: All matters daily we should be in constant consultation.

Kissinger: All right.



Berlin

Gromyko: On West Berlin, I think you underestimate the consequences of certain actions of the Federal Republic. We have relations with them; we do not want a worsening of relations. But we now are witnessing certain forces in West Germany which are pressing the Government and the Government does not have the stamina to resist. They take steps contrary to the Four-Power Agreement. And as to the Three Powers, we regret they did not show a minimum of respect and loyalty to the Four-Power Agreement and the Soviet Union. Only because the Federal Republic took this step, they say "We agree." Now the representatives of West Germany say: "If you take certain steps in regard to communications you will be responsible for the consequences." I do not want to use harsh words, but it is strange statements by West Germany. It is not only to the Democratic Republic but to the Soviet Union.

Kissinger: We were told by the West Germans that you are responsible.

Gromyko: It touches not only the Democratic Republic but the Soviet Union. So I would like to ask you to look into the situation. Maybe you have not had time.

Kissinger: I have looked into it. The original decision was made before I became Secretary of State, in August or September. The legal decision of the Federal Republic was that it is not a constitutional body. It does not make laws, only studies. I am just telling you the [their] legal position. The agreement only prohibits governmental functions.

That is the legal position; let us look at the real position.

I believe we should be more careful about these bodies in the future. We should look at their functions. And we should look at the governmental bodies. But we can't retroactively withdraw our approval. This would create an enormous crisis in our relations with the Federal Republic.

Gromyko: It would not be enough. Because the representatives of the Federal Republic will always say: "This is the law, this is the precedent." The immediate task is not to materialize it [sic], not just to worry about the future. Otherwise there is a violation of the Four-Power Agreement. No matter what its body and functions, it represents the power, the power of the Federal Republic and the state, the state. They represent this attitude.



Kissinger: I have to examine it in light of what you have said. I don't think it can be reversed from our side, but we can prevent similar occurrences.

Gromyko: For us it is a serious matter, and it is only to defend the agreement. There is no other way.

Kissinger: You will show restraint in what you do.

Gromyko: What is restraint? Up to now we have been hoping something would be done on the other side to remedy the situation. Even the Democratic Republic was going to take action but did not. So we are doing this. But for us there is no other way but to make certain conclusions.

I do not touch the broader aspects of this matter, because it, too, is just a question of confidence. One year and a half, and the agreement has been violated.

In West Germany there are two political parties, but for us it is a state. If the Government reflects the quality of West Germany as a sovereign state, then it has expressed its will in the agreement; no matter whether the other political party demands modification.

I have tried to put forward arguments in favor of our estimation of the situation. I discussed with the General Secretary our position as well. He asked me, told me, to stress this very candidly, hoping that you personally would pay attention to this.

If you have something on this, we would appreciate it as soon as possible.

Kissinger: I will be in touch with the German Foreign Minister next week, when he comes here [for the Energy Conference].

Europe

Gromyko: I may visit in mid-February Paris and Rome. I tell you preliminarily I may go. I was invited long ago, but my schedule was crowded. Not to go specially, but just to consult, and probably I will work for both of us.

If you have any wishes for me in connection with my forthcoming conversation with Jobert...



Kissinger: No. We will ignore him. He wants a confrontation with me, to get him publicity in Paris.

Gromyko: Don't think it is different with me.

Kissinger: No, he has the same attitude towards you. He does not discriminate against us. What can we do?

You will be aware of the fact that whatever you say to Jobert he will go to the Middle East with, for his own benefit.

Gromyko: You may be sure that whatever we talk with you will be considered confidential between us; it is essential. He, and if I see Pompidou, will express one or another form of dissatisfaction. Not only with your actions, but the different aspects. It is not the first time.

They don't like it when we do something together.

Did Sadat say anything about the French connection?

Kissinger: No. At first he tried to involve them in the Geneva Conference. But not lately.

Middle East

Gromyko: By the way, you and we did not recall the one question we discussed when you were in Moscow: the question of guarantees. Then we reached an understanding in principle about the role.

Kissinger: We said we were prepared to give guarantees. We don't insist on it. It depends on what the parties want.

Gromyko: Did you discuss it?

Kissinger: I don't know what the Arabs want. The Israelis are not enthusiastic.

Gromyko: They rely on their own arms!

Kissinger: They are prepared to discuss it when there is a final settlement. They are afraid the guarantees will be used as a substitute for...



Gromyko: We are talking about fulfillment. Something must be guaranteed. What will be guaranteed? Fulfillment of the agreement.

Kissinger: We have never discussed it with the Arabs. Our discussions with the Arabs are much less intimate than you could judge from the time we spent on them. Most of the time was spent on the details of disengagement.

Gromyko: What is your attitude toward guarantees if the parties agree?

Kissinger: We are prepared.

Gromyko: Guarantees of the fulfillment of the agreement.

Kissinger: That the agreement will not be broken.

Gromyko: I feel you are slow in your reaction.

Kissinger: No, I am trying to figure out what you have in mind. That without the parties having agreed, the two parties can intervene.... Can you give me an example?

Gromyko: That certain articles out of the X articles of the agreement are not fulfilled, and country A is not doing it. Then we say: "You're an honorable country; you are doing something wrong."

Kissinger: Then you have a violation of the agreement. What we don't want is intervention of outside powers without the request of the parties.

Give me another example; then I can react more.

Gromyko: Suppose something is wrong on the understanding on Jerusalem; one of the parties doesn't fulfill it adequately. We should take heed of it, should draw attention to it.

Kissinger: We should draw attention, yes.

We do not exclude participation in guarantees if the parties concerned request it, and then we have to work out the text of the guarantees.

Gromyko: First you say if they agree; then if they request.



Kissinger: It amounts to the same thing.

Gromyko: It should say "unless they disagree."

Kissinger: Well, we won't impose guarantees on parties against their will.

Gromyko: I detect a lack of enthusiasm.

Kissinger: No, it is a lack of imagination. I don't know what you have in mind. If they request it, we can give it. If they say nothing, we can offer it. But not if they don't want it.

Gromyko: That is too theoretical. Maybe even more for you than for me, guarantees can be something useful. The same for us -- Egypt and Syria. You say: "If you ask strongly, maybe we agree." But we can say, "Look, gentlemen" -- and in one case, Madame -- "we think it is useful."

Kissinger: I think it is premature to go into details about it.

Gromyko: Detail? It is not detail.

Kissinger: See, you have a big plan for the Middle East. I am not a big planner; I have to let the situation develop. [Gromyko smiles]

Gromyko: When will we review the Middle East situation again? When you come?

Kissinger: Definitely.

Gromyko: But not before.

Kissinger: We are now working on the Syria matter. When I get a response, I will let Vorontsov know.

Gromyko: Good. On Syria we will work...

Kissinger: ... together. Will you let us know what their response is?

Europe

Gromyko: Yes. Are there any other Western European developments?

Kissinger: Did I tell you about my conversation with Asad? How at the end of a long discussion he finally said there was one sentence in the letter



[to Waldheim] that he objected to -- the one that said Syria agreed to come?

Gromyko: You told me.

Kissinger: Any Western European developments? No. Are you thinking of anything in particular that should refresh my memory?

Gromyko: What is the goal of the Nine? To establish a superstate in Europe?

Kissinger: Yes.

Gromyko: Or just a collection of sovereign states?

Kissinger: They want a united foreign and defense policy.

Gromyko: Do the French agree?

Kissinger: The French are pushing it. We are not supporting it. We are not yet opposing it but we are not supporting it.

Gromyko: When it is scheduled?

Kissinger: Five years.

Gromyko: The French are always sensitive to this nuclear problem. West Germany.

Kissinger: First they will combine with Britain.

Gromyko: They will participate?

Kissinger: That is the logic of events. A combined foreign policy, economic policy, and defense policy.

Gromyko: What is behind it? What is the main factor that guides the French?

Kissinger: Political assertiveness. Self-assertion.

Gromyko: Self-assertion. To be stronger against you.



Kissinger: And you. It is directed at us both. It is not very well thought through. They want our protection so they can carry out an anti-American foreign policy.

Gromyko: Double security.

Kissinger: It is good if they can get it.

Gromyko: And they think they are angels.

Kissinger: They think you are the devil but that we will run the risks.

Gromyko: They see you as an angel.

Kissinger: We are considered children; they think they can play with us.

Gromyko: Jobert . . .

Kissinger: He thinks he is smarter than we.

Gromyko: Jobert, whenever you talk with him, it is in so complicated a way.

Kissinger: And nothing ever happens after you talk with him. This is what I've found.

Gromyko: He doesn't like any kind of joint action between us even for peace.

Kissinger: But he has no alternative.

Gromyko: No constructive alternative.

Kissinger: But he's in the great tradition of French diplomacy. Since Napoleon, other than de Gaulle

Gromyko: Napoleon III?

Kissinger: Napoleon III united Germany and Italy and made France a second-rate power. It may have been inevitable, but the French didn't have to do it.



After World War I, the Rhineland was the key. They had to keep Germany in the east; all it took was to move into the Rhineland.

Gromyko: When will they conclude the treaty, China and Japan?

Kissinger: My impression, when I was in China, is that their relations go very slowly.

What is your impression of what goes on in China?

Gromyko: It is something like the Cultural Revolution, with Mao behind it.

Kissinger: I must tell you, when I was at a dinner, I started discussing Confucius and all the Chinese at my table started shaking and getting nervous. I couldn't understand why my general discussion of an old philosopher had this effect. I was just making conversation.

Gromyko: Maybe they draw a parallel between Confucious and somebody living.

Then we pay attention to a statement by Teng Hsiao-ping. Now he is, I think, a deputy of Chou En-lai. He said: "I received a Japanese delegation because Chou is not a young man and it's difficult for him." And he made remarks hostile to the Soviet Union. We don't know what it means, this rearranging of the military. This process going on -- there is no stability.

Kissinger: No stability.

But nothing has changed in our relationship and there are no military discussions of any kind. Dobrynin asked about helicopters. There are discussions going on; they wanted some, but it was very few.

Gromyko: It is not an easy situation there for contacts.

Kissinger: Very difficult. They're very open in a very restricted group with me. But no contact with the people. Maybe we can discuss it further in Moscow.



Viet-Nam

Gromyko: Any news from Viet-Nam?

Kissinger: No.

Gromyko: Comparative quiet.

Kissinger: Comparatively quiet. If there is a major offensive, we will have to do something. But if it stays as it is, we won't do anything.

[They get up and walk downstairs.]

Gromyko: Our interest is in quiet and in fulfillment of the Agreement.

Kissinger: And any influence you can use

Gromyko: And this is a constant.

Kissinger Trip

[Dobrynin comes out to say goodbye.]

Kissinger: Shall I plan to arrive on the evening of the 17th?

Gromyko: Certainly.

Kissinger: It will be about three days?

Gromyko: The General Secretary said as much time as is necessary. Four to five days if needed.

Kissinger: You think we will have serious talks on SALT? There almost have to be.

Gromyko: Yes.

Kissinger: Because if there are . . .

I am looking very seriously at this. Anatoliy will confirm.



Jackson and our military are now a united front. I will bring something concrete.

If we do this, it will probably be four days.

What dates did you suggest?

Dobrynin: The 18th or 19th.

Kissinger: Then I will come the evening of the 18th.

Gromyko: Probably Zavidovo.

Kissinger: Good.

