

For my part, I told him that frankly speaking, I did not see much point in having such a meeting so soon if he, Kissinger, was going to continue to limit himself to general observations without going into the specific substance of the issues. The two of us talk a lot, Mr. Kissinger, but to be honest, we're not getting anywhere.

Kissinger immediately asked whether this was my personal view or whether this was the thinking in Moscow.

I replied that I had just expressed my purely personal point of view, but I thought it was also shared by Moscow.

Kissinger became noticeably agitated. He said he understood my dissatisfaction with the tenor of his remarks. He suggested that I meet with him on January 7. By that time he will try, following a discussion with the President, to set forth in more specific terms the U.S. position on the following topics: strategic arms, the Berlin question, and the Middle East.

I limited myself to saying that I do not object to the date he proposed for the meeting if he will be prepared for a substantive discussion.

He said that he would be ready for this.

During the conversation about the talks in Helsinki, Kissinger said that he was very surprised to read in one of Smith's latest coded messages his report about the comments made by the head of the Soviet delegation in a one-on-one conversation.

According to Smith, when the conversation turned to the two delegations' preliminary work plan for the summer of 1971, the Soviet representative allegedly said that they, the heads of the delegations, should not count on getting any work done during that period, because that will be the very time when the leaders of both governments will be actively preparing for a summit meeting, which is planned for precisely that time.

Smith, who knew nothing about the agreement on such a meeting, transmitted these comments by the Soviet representative directly to the White House and to President Nixon personally as some earth-shaking news. After receiving this telegram he, Kissinger, even before showing it to the President, had attempted to keep it from falling into anyone else's hands. At the same time, the appropriate strict orders were sent to Smith to keep quiet about this matter.

I decided to inform you of this, Kissinger said in conclusion, because I recalled Moscow's strict

warning which said that besides the leaders themselves, only three other people know about the summit meeting: on the Soviet side—the Minister and the Ambassador, on the U.S. side—only Kissinger. It turns out that now other people have learned of it as well.⁴

A. Dobrynin

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Telephone Call Between Presidential Assistant Kissinger and Ambassador Dobrynin

DECEMBER 24, 1970

106. Transcript of Telephone Conversation (U.S.)¹

Washington, December 24, 1970, 4:15 p.m.

K: I take it the Ivanov thing is on the track.

D: The man I spoke about² does not know the details because about that last assurance given from your side it doesn't matter what kind of decision taken by the court.

K: What do you mean?

D: You were obligated to take a [omission in transcript] but a final stage.

K: He doesn't know that but I will make it a matter of record. The State Dept. has just to work

⁴ In a separate memorandum of conversation, Dobrynin added that Kissinger also unofficially stated his "surprise" that, despite its decision against establishing a submarine base, the Soviet Union continued to engage in suspicious naval activities near Cuba. (AVP RF, f. 0129, op. 54a, p. 426, d. 1, l. 211–212)

¹ Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, Henry Kissinger Telephone Conversation Transcripts, Box 27, Dobrynin File. No classification marking.

² Secretary of State Rogers. Before the call from Kissinger, Dobrynin visited Rogers, who had suggested a meeting to survey the "most important issues" in Soviet-American relations, including the Middle East, European security, Berlin, and SALT. According to Dobrynin, Rogers not only began by reporting Nixon's decision to arrange for Ivanov's release but also ended by raising Nixon's concern about possible visits of Democratic presidential candidates to Moscow. "The conversation with Rogers was almost verbatim the same as the corresponding conversation with Kissinger," Dobrynin noted in his report on the meeting. "Apparently, Nixon spoke with each of them separately on this matter." (AVP RF, f. 0129, op. 54, p. 405, d. 6, l. 179–190)

out the arrangements with you. It will be a record in the WH and the Justice Department. No point in making it—

D: I just understood it was the case—

K: Only to prevent a leak. I have two other things—when we were talking the other day of minor things that cause irritation, one that hasn't happened yet but as presidential campaigning begins, many aspirants will go to various capitals. Things that help certain candidates will take exception when other candidates weren't given them.

D: One already applied.³ I wrote to Moscow but haven't received a response. For the first of January. Don't know what the answer is. We were told rather asked if it was possible.

K: We cannot say that someone shouldn't visit Moscow but when the President was a candidate the circle of people he could see was definitive. If it changed for these, it would cause [omission in the transcript].

D: No one will ask any candidate to do anything.

K: But taken out of context it could be used that way.

D: How can we keep it quiet?

K: It's entirely a sovereign decision. It's just that in my judgment some things that cause problems within the intrinsic [omission in transcript]. I didn't know there was one planned.

D: It's been almost two weeks.

K: Being received by top level people and being there are two different things.

D: No, when I talk about going it's for a meeting with top level people. I can give visas for any Senator to go but when I say it was an application, it was to visit people.

K: So you meant with top level—if they see top level—it's up to you.

D: I have no answer—maybe today or tomorrow. I don't know.

K: The point that was made to me when the President was there he was refused to see senior people and he remembers it of course. If they are received, if conversations could be kept so that they cannot be used it would help political discussions we are planning. This is personal advice and not an official request. I thought you may want to see

³ Senator Edmund Muskie. At the time, Muskie was the leading candidate for the Democratic presidential nomination in 1972.

the comments I made on our relations at the back-grounder today, which you will find constructive.

D: Have you already typed it?

K: I will have a copy sent over. I have not seen it yet. As soon as it's done. Finally and most importantly (something about the M. E.) but because you felt there was some urgency.

D: I will invite you.

K: The President would be prepared to have me discuss with you some of the general proposals and formulations and in the meantime we should avoid matters to aggravate the military situation there. Some ideas you have discussed the other day he is considering in a positive spirit and I will say more to you on the 7th.

D: Off the record, if something could be more completely now—it is important based on Soviet/American relations and would be good to discuss concrete—

K: I am doing something on this. Berlin (I have worked out).

D: Strategic.

K: I will give it to you on the 7th. We have made a preliminary decision.

D: I will wait to have the usual dinner with you.

K: I want you to know on general background. In my backgrounder I said settlement in the M. E. not possible because it was not in the interest of the Soviets. (But that was just as a diversion.)

D: Send it in a personal envelope to me.

K: Merry Christmas and see you on the 7th.

D: I hope you will see your children.

K: They are coming to the W. Coast with me.⁴

⁴ Kissinger called Nixon at 4:50 p.m. and reported: "I wanted to tell you I had a long talk on the phone with Dobrynin and hung out the prospects for SALT and Berlin and the Middle East. I said that if Presidential candidates started receiving treatment not accorded others in Moscow we would look very unsympathetically on it. He said the Senator had already asked and I said he had better not come back with statements he can use in a partisan way because it will jeopardize everything." (National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, Henry Kissinger Telephone Conversation Transcripts, Box 8, Chronological File)

107. Memorandum of Telephone Conversation (USSR)¹

Washington, December 24, 1970.

1. Kissinger called me late this evening, December 24. He explained his late call by saying that he was about to fly to California for several days but would like to inform me of the following without delay.

He had told the President in detail about the conversation we had yesterday.² With Nixon's approval, he would now be ready to discuss with me specific issues relating to a Middle East settlement during our next meeting on January 7. During the conversation with him today, the President again expressed his conviction that a lasting Middle East settlement is possible only with the joint participation of both the Soviet Union and the United States.

Kissinger also expressed the hope that by the time of the meeting he would be able to present some specific ideas on certain aspects of the problem of limiting strategic arms. He had discussed this issue with the President as well.

Then, in a very cautious manner, Kissinger began discussing how, as the U.S. election campaign approaches, certain presidential candidates will probably want to visit the USSR and meet with Soviet leaders with the sole purpose of later trying to use all this for their own personal political ends. As far as Kissinger knows, President Nixon hopes that Moscow will not do anything to make these trips a big issue in the purely internal contest within the U.S., much less the source of unnecessary complications between the governments that are currently in power in the two countries.

I replied that, as Kissinger well knows, travel by American political figures to various countries is common practice in the U.S. President Nixon himself, before he was President, also took such trips on a number of occasions.

"But the Soviet leaders did not receive him in 1967 when he was in Moscow," Kissinger interjected.

I replied that first, as far as I recalled, Nixon himself did not ask for such a meeting at that time.

He was something of a "tourist." And second, when at the height of the 1968 election campaign, during which Nixon was running for his current position of President, he made such a request of Moscow, he was quickly given an affirmative reply. It's not our fault that he later changed his mind about coming.

I went on to ask what Nixon's own reaction would have been if the President at that time had advised us not to meet with him in Moscow.

Kissinger immediately corrected himself saying that he, of course, understood that giving consent to travel to Moscow is the sole prerogative of the Soviet Government. They cannot, therefore, have any grievances in this regard. Having said all this, he quickly changed the subject.

On the whole, it was evident that the question of trips to Moscow by Nixon's opponents is gradually beginning to attract the attention of the incumbent President. However, understanding the sensitivity of the whole issue, they are beginning to do some maneuvering to gradually bring it into the scope of Soviet-U.S. relations.

It cannot be ruled out that the willingness Kissinger expressed at the beginning of the conversation to proceed to a more specific discussion of foreign policy issues has a certain connection to this whole matter. It is possible that the talks in Moscow with the UAR delegation, which are being followed here very closely, are playing a part here as well.

2. The following thoughts come to mind in connection with Kissinger's request to us regarding possible visits to Moscow by Nixon's political rivals.

In light of the veiled but nevertheless rather clearly expressed concern of the President, it would be all the more fitting to receive Senator Muskie in Moscow.

First, it is not to our advantage to deny Nixon's political opponents trips to and meetings in Moscow, because this is and could still continue to be a fairly important instrument for pressuring the current occupant of the White House.

Second, Nixon should not be left with the impression that right up to the election he will have some kind of "veto power" over any trips by American politicians to Moscow without, moreover, giving us anything in return except vague promises. In brief, Nixon still has to earn our possible restraint.

¹ Source: AVP RF, f. 0129, op. 54a, p. 426, d. 1, l. 213–216. Top Secret. From Dobrynin's Journal.

² Reference is presumably to the conversation between Kissinger and Dobrynin on December 22.

Third, it is not to our advantage to damage relations with other candidates for the presidency who could still win the 1972 election and, moreover, be politically more acceptable to us than the current President.

At the same time, taking into account Kissinger's direct request, made essentially on behalf of the President, as well as the fact that the elections are still almost two years away, it would also be useful for us to play a certain game with Nixon with respect to Muskie's visit. For example, the latter could be received in Moscow by one of the Soviet leaders, but not by both, with whom he had requested a meeting. He could also meet with the Soviet Foreign Minister which, incidentally, Muskie additionally requested yesterday when he was urging us to expedite our response regarding his trip. Apparently, it would probably be inappropriate in this connection to give the Muskie visit to Moscow too much "publicity."³

Nixon could then be informed in a careful and appropriate way about such a "balanced" reception through the confidential channel.

In this context, it should be made clear to him that our future conduct regarding this entire matter, which is of interest to him, will depend to a large extent on his concrete practical policy regarding Soviet-U.S. relations and those international issues that are of greatest interest to us.

It is important that the incumbent President constantly remain alert (but without excessively annoying him personally) to the fact that we can still play a role in the upcoming 1972 U.S. presidential election campaign, especially if he ignores our interests or directly opposes them.

A. Dobrynin

³ Translator's note: Dobrynin placed this word in quotation marks, spelling the English word "publicity" in the Cyrillic alphabet.