

He added that Ambassador Rush is coming to Washington now in connection with Scheel's visit.

The subsequent conversation—during which I outlined our approach to the issue of civilian transit and the appropriate way to formalize it—did not, for the moment, yield anything else that was new.

Kissinger himself, along with Nixon and Rogers, has now gone off to Florida, where they will be working together to finish up the report on foreign policy issues that the President is to submit to Congress in a week. They will be back in Washington on Monday or Tuesday.⁶

3. Three other remarks Kissinger made during our conversation should be noted.

—President Nixon has prepared a response to President Tito in connection with the latter's communication on Middle East affairs. It is to be delivered to him on February 10 or 11, i.e., before his trip to Cairo. According to Kissinger, there is nothing new in Nixon's reply. "Tito is not a source through which one could conduct serious, protracted negotiations or an exchange of views."

—Touching upon President Sadat's proposal to open the Suez Canal, Kissinger said they are "not actively involved" at present in the ongoing discussion between the UAR and Israel on this issue. That is primarily a matter for the interested parties themselves. However, the President has no objection to a confidential exchange of views with the Soviet side on this issue if the Soviet side thinks it useful.

—Kissinger tossed off the remark that the views he set forth to the Soviet Ambassador on January 9, on seeking ways to achieve a peace settlement in Vietnam, "are still operative."

I replied briefly to the effect that the new U.S. military actions undertaken since then against the DRV, Cambodia, and Laos are not very indicative of Washington's intentions to resolve the problems of Indochina by peaceful means.

A. Dobrynin

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122. Telegram From Ambassador Dobrynin to the Soviet Foreign Ministry¹

Washington, February 14, 1971.

Urgent

We feel that it's necessary to report our initial observations and express certain thoughts in connection with the exchange of views we are now holding with the White House through the confidential channel.

1. It is clearly evident from our meetings here that the White House's main motivation in proceeding with this exchange is the prospect of a summit meeting. This has compelled Nixon to agree to discuss issues which, under other circumstances, he would hardly elevate to the level of this channel, much less take up personally, leaving them instead to ordinary diplomatic negotiations.

2. It has already become quite clear that Nixon's (and Kissinger's) degree of interest in discussing various problems and searching for possible agreement within a relatively short period of time varies from issue to issue.

Currently, they are the most interested in the issue of strategic arms during these talks. We believe that after vigorous "bargaining" here and in Vienna, it will nonetheless be possible to reach agreement on a separate accord limiting ABM systems. In any event, even before a summit meeting the White House is apparently prepared to make certain efforts to have the text of an agreement in hand by that time.

As for West Berlin, the White House does not have a great deal of interest, for reasons that are well known. However, Nixon fears that an overly negative position on their part concerning this issue could perpetuate the deadlock at the four-party talks, and thereby make it more difficult to secure our final consent to a summit meeting. Moreover, they are not, in principle, averse to trying to resolve the Berlin issue if the terms of an agreement are sufficiently acceptable. To all appearances, however, the White House generally wouldn't want to display great haste on this matter (keeping it as a

⁶ February 15 or 16.

¹ Source: AVP RF, f. 059a, op. 7, p. 13, d. 9, l. 24–32. Top Secret. A handwritten notation on the first page reads: "The Minister [Gromyko] has reviewed the telegram."

kind of guarantee of a summit). They are also playing a game with Brandt here.

On the Middle East, the Americans have thus far been noticeably reluctant to hold concrete negotiations, playing up the Jarring mission and Israel's "strong objections" to "interference" by the great powers in the negotiations that are underway. It would appear, however, that we still have some untapped potential here for putting additional pressure on Nixon in the direction we need. Here again the issue of a summit meeting could be a useful tool for us in this respect.

3. In the exchange of views now underway, one can discern a uniform plan in the White House's approach to discussing various political problems with us through the confidential channel. If at all possible, they want to reach agreement in principle at this level, which for the time being would, in effect, be known only to two people on their side (the President and Kissinger), and then turn the matter over for more detailed negotiations through diplomatic channels, with occasional White House intervention in these negotiations in the future, if necessary.

It is evident from the meetings that they are clearly avoiding getting into all the minutiae, much less getting involved in overly detailed negotiations through the confidential channel on all aspects of the complex problems.

The best example of this is their approach to discussing an agreement on limiting ABM systems—an issue which they are apparently now more interested in resolving successfully. They propose discussing an overall understanding in principle on the key aspects of a future agreement through the confidential channel, and then setting it out in the form of a document, i.e., letters that Nixon and the Soviet leadership could exchange in strict confidence prior to the resumption of the negotiations between the two countries' delegations in Vienna in mid-March. They then propose instructing the delegations to discuss and reach agreement on all the details of a future accord.

4. At the same time, speaking of the U.S. side, we should also take into account the following feature of the negotiations through the confidential channel. Nixon clearly fears that word of his confidential dialogue with us on strategic arms, West Berlin, and primarily the Middle East might leak out prematurely, especially before the outcome of the dialogue itself is clear, as well as the related question of a summit meeting. He has his own

agenda here with the opposition, Congress, Jewish circles and, finally, his Western allies.

Thus, for the time being he prefers that this whole dialogue not extend beyond the walls of the White House, or in this case Kissinger's hands. The latter, being highly ambitious, is of course doing all he can to encourage these sentiments on the part of the President, since that allows him, Kissinger, rather than Secretary of State Rogers (with whom he is engaged in an unspoken rivalry), to play the principal role in these talks. And the facts do indeed show that on the U.S. side, the State Department has now generally been sidelined from all dialogue of any significance with us.

5. However, now that the White House has cornered the market on all the negotiations with us on key issues, it is, in fact, having difficulties conducting those negotiations in any great detail without the assistance of professional experts, whom it has thus far avoided calling in. This is especially apparent from our most recent meetings on West Berlin. My counterpart is noticeably apprehensive about getting into a discussion of the details, much less devising language on them (with regard to transit issues, for example), lest he be "caught flat-footed" without professional expertise on these matters.

Of course, there is also an element of gamesmanship here, especially when it involves matters they are not particularly interested in resolving. But the fact that on their side the current dialogue via the confidential channel is basically being conducted by two people (the President and his assistant) who do not have detailed experience in these matters is undoubtedly leaving a considerable imprint on the current stage of the negotiations through this channel, and this has to be taken into account. There is also no doubt that as the White House gets into the substance of the issues, it will have to somewhat expand the group of individuals involved by bringing in State Department career personnel.

6. In light of the foregoing, we would like to present a few practical considerations concerning further negotiations through the confidential channel.

a) Regarding the issue of a separate agreement on limiting ABM systems, in our view, we could agree to their proposal to focus now on working out the fullest possible agreement in principle and formalizing it through an exchange of appropri-

ate, identical documents (letters). Then, at the negotiations between the two delegations in Vienna, efforts could be made to draft the text of the actual agreement.

b) Regarding West Berlin, we should first of all figure out just who is being “cagier” here: Nixon and Kissinger, or Brandt and Bahr. (Possibly both sides, albeit for different motives.) The Americans persistently refer to the fact that they are prepared to accept whatever is acceptable to Brandt, but in their confidential contacts with them, the latter has supposedly gone no further than what has been proposed by the Western powers.

In our conversations with Kissinger here we are, of course, not disclosing our confidential contacts with the West Germans in Bonn and in Moscow, but nonetheless some thought should be given to specific ways in which we might try to make use of the assertion that “Nixon is prepared to agree to everything Brandt agrees to.”

To that end it might be possible to expressly prepare wording that we have privately discussed with the West Germans in principle and propose it to the Americans as specifically coming from us (so as to avoid officially tying Brandt’s hands in front of his allies), at the same time intimating that this could serve as the basis for a compromise acceptable to all parties.

As for the current issues raised in the most recent discussion with Kissinger on West Berlin, it seems to us that it is possible:

—to agree that the U.S. and Soviet ambassadors, along with their experts at the four-party negotiations, hold a confidential discussion of issues related to limiting (terminating) the activities of Bundestag and Bundesrat committees and factions, as well as any meetings and conventions of federal political parties in West Berlin.

In this connection, we are assuming that after our ambassadors in Berlin have done a certain amount of work on the renditions of this wording, we could return to a discussion of the key differences through our confidential channel.

In the meantime, we will be pressuring Kissinger on other points of our draft wording with respect to curtailing the FRG’s political presence in West Berlin.

We also feel it would now be appropriate to focus attention on reaching agreement on a procedure which would be acceptable to us for turning over the discussion of transit issues to the Germans

themselves. Kissinger brought up this question himself, and discussion of this should continue.

By all indications, neither Nixon nor Kissinger is going to get involved in discussing through the confidential channel the full range of West Berlin issues already under discussion by the ambassadors of the Four Powers. It is unlikely that they will want to get into all these subtleties or hold detailed, parallel talks on all these matters at their level.

Thus, this leads us to select, out of this overall set of issues, only those that are truly uppermost and of greatest importance to us, and to focus on them in the confidential channel in an effort to reach agreement on just a few points, but the most important ones. (As agreement is reached, we could gradually move forward, though not all at once.) We already mentioned above some of these points that we now intend to focus our attention on here.

c) Concerning an all-European conference, we believe it would be appropriate to continue pressuring the White House to accept the Finnish proposal.²

d) As for the Middle East, we have already presented our proposals. The appearance of the text of the memorandum (recommendations) that has now been prepared by Jarring himself, although it complicates the situation in regard to the preparation of joint Soviet-U.S. recommendations (or Four-Power recommendations), in no way lessens the importance or relevance of our well-known, fundamental policy on a Middle East settlement.

We should keep pressuring Nixon through the confidential channel for a response to our proposals of June of last year,³ continuing to emphasize that since we accommodated them on the peace formula, we are awaiting their response on the question of the troop withdrawal, especially since they themselves promised to do it. We intend to continue doing this at future meetings with Kissinger.

7. Three major political issues are now simultaneously on the agenda of the Soviet-U.S. dialogue through the confidential channel: West Berlin, strategic arms limitation, and the Middle East. As mentioned above, progress on these issues varies, but, on the whole, we believe it is clearly insufficient, and in some instances progress thus far is virtually non-existent.

² See footnote 7, Document 112.

³ See footnote 4, Document 60.

In our view, stepping up our efforts and focusing them on key aspects of these problems, while at the same time taking advantage of the President's interest in a summit meeting, could enable us to exert additional pressure on the White House and bring about certain progress. After a while we could reassess the situation and draw appropriate practical conclusions regarding our subsequent talks with the U.S.

For our part, we intend to follow the approach outlined above (we have instructions on the three aforementioned issues), unless there are some additional instructions.

A. Dobrynin

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Meeting Between Presidential Assistant Kissinger and Ambassador Dobrynin

FEBRUARY 16, 1971

123. Memorandum of Conversation (U.S.)¹

Washington, February 16, 1971, 3:15–3:55 p.m.

I made an appointment with Dobrynin on the first day back from Key Biscayne as soon as I had word that the submarine tender and a nuclear submarine had returned to Cienfuegos.

Dobrynin began the conversation in a very jovial mood and asked me whether any progress had been made on Berlin. I told him I had received some answers on Berlin from Bahr and from Rush, but I was in no position to proceed because I had a particular matter to discuss about Cuba.

I said that Soviet behavior puzzled me. At the precise moment that we began conversations leading toward a Summit, a Soviet submarine tender and nuclear submarine appeared in Cienfuegos Harbor. We had made it very clear that we would

not tolerate the servicing of nuclear attack submarines in or from Cienfuegos Harbor. We had also made it clear that we considered a submarine tender as constituting an essential element of a base, and here it was back.

Dobrynin rejoined that this was only a port call as the Soviets had told us would take place, and he could not understand why every time a Soviet ship showed up in the Caribbean I called his attention to it.

I said that I wanted to insist once more that this was a matter of good faith. The submarine tender had not been gone from Cuba for 30 days before another submarine tender appeared. If the Soviet Union wanted to provoke a crisis, I could understand it, though I would have expected them to provoke a crisis in an area which was more advantageous to them.

Dobrynin asked whether I was saying that every time the Soviet Union appeared in Cuban waters they had to give an account to us.

I said that the matter was perfectly simple. The submarine tender in Cienfuegos, together with the installations that already existed there, represented an essential element of a naval base and was, therefore, contrary to our understanding. Dobrynin wanted to turn the conversation to Berlin. I said I was not prepared to discuss it until I had some explanation on the naval base and on the submarine tender.

Dobrynin said that this would be construed as very arrogant in Moscow. I replied that in the United States their behavior was construed as being very provocative. He said, "Will you be prepared to talk again on Friday?"² I said I doubted it. Dobrynin said he had a message from Hanoi,³ but under the circumstances, he was prepared to wait with it. I said that it was entirely up to him whether he wanted to deliver it.

Dobrynin said it was a pity that matters had reached this point, and we had to remember that

² February 19.

³ In a telegram on February 12, Gromyko instructed Dobrynin to tell Kissinger during their next meeting that Moscow had briefed Hanoi on the proposals Kissinger outlined to Dobrynin on January 9 while "thinking out loud." Although he noted a discrepancy in U.S. policy between secret diplomacy on Vietnam and military action in Laos, Gromyko added: "as far as we know, the [North] Vietnamese side is prepared for the possibility of reviving Kissinger's direct contacts with DRV representatives in Paris." (AVP RF, f. 59a, op. 7, p. 13, d. 9, l. 23) See also Luu Van Loi and Nguyen Anh Vu, *Le Duc Tho-Kissinger Negotiations in Paris*, p. 166.

¹ Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 490, President's Trip Files, Dobrynin/Kissinger, 1971, Vol. 4 [Pt. 2]. Top Secret; Sensitive; Eyes Only. The meeting was held in the Map Room at the White House. The time of the meeting is taken from Kissinger's Record of Schedule. (Library of Congress, Manuscript Division, Kissinger Papers, Box 438, Miscellany, 1968–76)