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E.O. 12958, Sect. 3.6

PRM/A

By: KW NARA, Date 5-6-08

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

THE PRESIDENT HAS SEEN,

*General A
file*

SECRET-NODIS

June 13, 1969

MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

FROM: Henry A. Kissinger *K*

SUBJECT: Memorandum of Conversation with Ambassador Dobrynin,
June 11, 1969

Dobrynin had requested the appointment to inform me that he had been recalled to Moscow for consultations. Dobrynin opened the conversation by saying that he had been impressed by the deliberateness and precision of the Administration. We had moved one step at a time towards first establishing a general atmosphere, then into the Middle East talks, then beginning some discussion on Vietnam and only when the main outlines were set did we offer to have the SALT talks. We had not been stampeded at any point. He had reported accordingly to his government. He said the Soviet Union preferred to deal with careful planners since they were much more predictable.

Dobrynin then turned to Vietnam. I told him that we were following a very careful policy. We had our moves for the next few months fully worked out. I reminded him of what the President had said when we gave him an advance copy of the Vietnam speech. He should not be confused by the many statements that he heard. We were not interfering with much that was being said. But the President reserved the final decision on essential items. Dobrynin replied that he had noticed that we moved on about the schedule we had given him a month ago.

Dobrynin then asked about our ideas for settling the war in Vietnam. He inquired especially on our views on a coalition government. I said that he and I were both realists. He knew very well that in order to bring about a coalition government we would have to smash the present structure of the Saigon Government while the NLF remained intact. This would guarantee an NLF victory sooner or later. We would never accept that. We would agree to a fair political contest -- not to what the President had called a disguised defeat.

Dobrynin made no effort to defend Hanoi's position. He replied that Hanoi was very difficult. He said I could be sure that the Soviet Union had transmitted our discussion of April and added a recommendation. However,

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Hanoi believed that they knew their own requirements better than the Soviet Union. I said, on the other hand, the Soviet Union supplied 85% of the military equipment. Dobrynin asked whether we wanted the Soviet Union to give Hanoi an ultimatum. I said it was not for me to tell the Soviet Union how to conduct its relations with its allies. I said that we were determined to have the war ended one way or another. Hanoi was attempting to break down the President's public support. It was too much to ask us to hold still for that. I added that what we needed was some strategic help, not just negotiating devices for settling particular problems as has been the case until now. Dobrynin, who was very subdued, said I could be sure that they are looking into the question.

Dobrynin then asked me about US-Soviet relations in general. I said that while some gradual progress was possible even during the Vietnam war, a really massive change depended on the settlement of the Vietnam war. Dobrynin said we always seem to link things. I replied that as a student of Marxism he must believe in the importance of objective factors. It was an objective fact that Hanoi was trying to undermine the President. It was an objective fact that we had to look to every avenue for a solution. Dobrynin then said supposing the war were settled, how would you go about improving relations.

I called his attention to the President's offer of increased trade and I also suggested the possibility of a summit meeting. I said that they could count on the same careful preparation for a summit meeting that characterized all the President's efforts. One possibility would be to have a meeting at which the major issues were discussed together with a precise agenda for dealing with them, to be followed by periodic meetings to resolve them. In this way we might reach a stage in which war between the two major nuclear countries would become unthinkable, and other countries which might be emerging could not disturb the peace of the world. I added this should help the Soviets with some of their allies. Dobrynin said that they had no problem with any of their allies. I replied that China was still a Soviet ally. Dobrynin emphatically said China is not an ally; it is our chief security problem. He was very intrigued by the suggestion of a summit meeting and I added that there was no prospect of it without a settlement of the Vietnam war.

Dobrynin then turned to the Middle East. He said the Soviet Union was very interested in a settlement -- Sisco was always speaking in the abstract about secure and recognized borders. The Soviet Union was perfectly willing to discuss a rectification of the borders even if it did not promise

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to agree right away. Gromyko was in Cairo to try to see how much give there was in the Egyptian position. I said that if Vietnam were settled, we could certainly give more top level attention to the Middle East.

Dobrynin returned to the theme of US-Soviet relations and asked what he could tell his principals when he returned. I said that everything depended on the war in Vietnam. If the war were ended, he could say that there was no limit to what might be accomplished. You would like to be remembered as a President who ensured a permanent peace and a qualitative change in international relations. Dobrynin asked whether we were expecting a change in the Moscow leadership. I replied that we had no intention of playing domestic politics in the Kremlin. Dobrynin said: "Don't believe your Soviet experts; they understand nothing."

Dobrynin then asked whether I might be willing to come to Moscow sometime very quietly to explain your thinking to Kosygin and Brezhnev. I told Dobrynin that this would have to be discussed with you but that if it were for the right issue, you would almost certainly entertain the proposition.

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24. Memorandum of Conversation (USSR)¹

Washington, June 12, 1969.

On June 12, the day before I left for Moscow, Kissinger, the Assistant to the President, called me and asked for a meeting before my departure. I agreed, and the meeting took place in Kissinger's office at the White House (this meeting, like all previous meetings with him, was confidential).

Kissinger began the conversation by remarking that President Nixon knew I was leaving for the USSR, and this meeting had been arranged with his knowledge so that when the Soviet Ambassa-

dor reported to his government during his stay in Moscow, he, the Ambassador, could, if necessary, provide "first-hand" information concerning the President's views on various international issues, and particularly on Soviet-U.S. relations.

Kissinger said he can state with full responsibility that, besides resolution of the Vietnam issue (which he intends to address in greater detail a little later), President Nixon regards *Soviet-U.S. relations* as the other main foreign policy area for him to focus on. He has established as his main objective in this area the need to avoid situations that could lead to direct confrontation between the U.S. and the USSR. He, the President, believes that this objective is fully attainable. In any event, on instructions from the President, he, Kissinger, can provide assurances that Nixon will not allow third countries, or events in one region of the world or another, to induce him to pursue a course that threatens to cause a direct clash between our countries. In this connection, the President hopes and believes that the Soviet Government holds the same view.

However, Kissinger continued, this is only one side of the question. During his presidency—until 1972, and perhaps until 1976, if he is re-elected—Nixon very much wants to see Soviet-U.S. relations enter a constructive phase that differs from the relations which existed during the Cold War and which, regrettably, still continue to have an impact today. Even though ideological differences will undoubtedly remain and will continue to make themselves felt, because they are too deep, the President nonetheless believes that the aforementioned turnaround in the intergovernmental relations between our countries is quite possible and desirable, although this will require time and patient efforts on both sides, taking into account each other's interests.

Kissinger continued that, in all of this, President Nixon assigns an extremely important place to *a meeting with Soviet leaders*. However, he approaches this very important issue with a certain degree of caution, mainly owing to domestic political considerations and the worldwide reaction to this. The point is that such meetings are accompanied by inevitable fanfare, by various kinds of sensations, by rash predictions, and particularly by so-called "great expectations" at first, and then by equally great "disappointment," although, logically speaking, it is difficult to expect a summit meeting lasting 2–3 days to produce major results right

¹ Source: AVP RF, f. 0129, op. 53, p. 399, d. 6, l. 98–111. Secret. The date on the memorandum is evidently in error; the meeting was held on June 11.

away, especially as the most complex international problems can hardly be resolved immediately, since the relevant obstacles and the accumulated baggage of many years must be dealt with one step at a time. Regrettably, public opinion expects “miracles” from such meetings, but since miracles are difficult to achieve, various speculations about a “setback,” a “failure,” begin to circulate, and this does not help the process of searching for solutions; it has a negative psychological impact on the meeting’s participants who, from the very outset, subconsciously begin thinking about what they will have to tell the press at the end of the meeting.

That is why, Kissinger continued, President Nixon is convinced that holding only one such meeting with the Soviet leadership during his entire presidency (as was the case with Presidents Kennedy and Johnson) is, evidently, not the proper way to proceed. It would be advisable to hold several meetings at regular intervals—say, once a year. That way the meetings will cause less of a sensation and will be more businesslike. During these meetings we will not have to search for some outwardly non-committal formula that appears to give a certain amount of satisfaction to the public, but, in essence, does little to bring about progress. Instead, we could periodically engage in a businesslike discussion of the most important problems and search for mutually acceptable avenues of approach, without worrying that the press would subsequently label this a “failure to agree” or a “setback” for the Soviet and U.S. leaders, because everyone would know that in a little while there would be another meeting, at which discussion of the problems would continue, and in the interim they would undertake appropriate efforts through diplomatic channels.

At such meetings, Kissinger continued, we should not only seek solutions to the most difficult issues (very often this cannot be done right away), but also hold mutual consultations and an exchange of views on potentially explosive situations that could involve the two sides in conflict; even if their views on such situations do not coincide, the parties will better understand each other’s motives and, in their actions, will not overstep dangerous boundaries. Of course, in any event, there must be thorough advance preparation for summit meetings, bearing in mind the need to derive maximum benefit from them under certain specific conditions.

Kissinger asked what I thought about the idea of holding such meetings periodically. I gave it as my personal view that, in principle, this idea merits attention.

Then, turning to specific problems and regions, Kissinger said that with respect to *Europe*, Nixon agrees that there should be no attempts to change the situation that developed as a result of World War II. It is common knowledge that, in principle, the U.S. is in favor of German unification, but to all appearances, this is, realistically speaking, an issue for the very, very distant future. The current administration does not intend to stir things up or force events in that direction. On the contrary, it is, for example, interested in achieving a certain degree of stability with respect to *West Berlin* so that events there do not, on occasion, cause Soviet-U.S. relations to heat up. We are awaiting, Kissinger added, possible, more specific proposals from the Soviet side in this regard, in view of the fact that this was mentioned in the Soviet Government’s first communication to President Nixon back in February of this year.²

When I countered with a question as to what the U.S. side itself could propose in this connection, Kissinger responded that they would still like to receive more specific Soviet ideas first. However, his remarks could be taken to mean that, in exchange for “quiet” on the access routes to West Berlin they could discuss steps to “neutralize” the FRG actions in that city that are the cause of the “friction” between the GDR and its allies—above all, the USSR—and between the FRG and its allies, including the U.S. At the same time, it could be inferred that Washington is, however, not prepared to agree to “free city” status for West Berlin at this time.

During our discussion of European affairs, Kissinger reiterated that President Nixon takes into account the Soviet Union’s special interests in the *Eastern European* region and does not intend to do anything there that could be viewed in Moscow as a “challenge” to its status in that region. That is Nixon’s principled position on this issue, Kissinger asserted, and one should not pay a great deal of attention “to certain critical remarks made by the President in public concerning one Eastern European country, since that is merely a gesture to certain

² Printed as an attachment to Document 5.

segments of the U.S. population that play a role in the U.S. elections.”³

As Secretary of State Rogers had done earlier, Kissinger raised the question of joint ratification of the treaty *on the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons*, as President Nixon had proposed to us several months ago. Kissinger emphasized that Nixon continues to attach great importance to the factor of simultaneous ratification of that treaty by the Soviet Union and the United States for two reasons. First, this would be the first important joint Soviet-U.S. action since the beginning of his presidency, and, in his view, its significance would go beyond the event itself.

Second, Nixon is convinced that joint Soviet-U.S. ratification would increase the pressure on those countries that have not yet signed the treaty.

I stated our position on this issue. I reminded [him] that, as the U.S. side had already been informed, the treaty is currently under consideration in the foreign affairs commissions of the Supreme Soviet; under Soviet law, this is an integral part of the treaty ratification process. Further, I expressed my personal view that the U.S. is not currently exerting the necessary influence and pressure on the government of the FRG, which is openly evading signing the treaty; this could, to a great extent, make the treaty pointless. I went on to express the hope that the Nixon Government would, nonetheless, take a more active role vis-à-vis Bonn, in an effort to get it to sign the treaty as soon as possible.

In point of fact, Kissinger did not deny that, in this sense, they are not currently putting any serious pressure on Bonn. He tried to justify this by citing the “delay in our response” to Nixon’s proposal on simultaneous ratification of the treaty by the USSR and the U.S. According to Kissinger, the leadership in Bonn is supposedly telling them—along with references to the election campaign in the FRG—that they, the West Germans, do not need to hurry, since the USSR has itself not ratified the treaty.

In general, from the discussion of this topic one gains the impression that Nixon apparently sees our avoidance of his proposal on joint ratification as an

unwillingness on our part at this time (the Communist Party Congress, the exacerbation of Sino-Soviet differences) to demonstrate unity of action with him, Nixon, by taking such a step, rather than as a belief in the argument that our non-ratification will exert some sort of pressure on the FRG. (Kissinger argued in many different ways that the absence of ratification by the USSR and the U.S. in fact helps those forces in the FRG that oppose the treaty.)

In general, based on our observations, one can evidently state with a fair degree of certainty that in the near future the U.S. itself will not complete ratification of the treaty or exert strong pressure of the FRG until we agree to the above-mentioned proposal from Nixon, or until we give a more definite response than we have thus far. (It is the Embassy’s view that consideration of this treaty by the commissions of the Supreme Soviet should not go on too long. If worse comes to worst, the treaty could even be ratified with a special reservation concerning the need for accession by the FRG.)

Speaking of other areas where Nixon feels that Soviet-U.S. contacts and a bilateral exchange of views should be pursued, Kissinger referred to the problem of a Middle East settlement, issues related to limiting strategic nuclear arms, and—in the future—the gradual development of our trade relations.

Touching upon the *Middle East*, Kissinger said Nixon believes that if it is at all possible to do anything at this time to bring us closer to a solution to that tangled and extremely complex problem, this can be achieved only through a confidential bilateral exchange of views between the USSR and the U.S., which know what their “clients” want, and to some extent share their views, but which must not be unduly influenced by their clients.

According to Kissinger, Nixon intends, in the not-too-distant future—after “he recently finished working out his program of action” on the Vietnam issue and hopes to review and approve the directives for the upcoming Soviet-U.S. strategic arms limitation talks soon—to personally study the specific possibilities for a Middle East settlement in greater detail. In addition to the meeting with the king of Jordan, which has already taken place, he plans to meet next month with Israeli Prime Minister Golda Meir; in particular, the U.S. Government intends to discuss the current situation with her, especially in light of the bilateral Soviet-U.S. exchange of views and taking into account the Soviet response,

³ During his commencement address at the Air Force Academy in Colorado Springs on June 4, Nixon remarked: “if America were to turn its back on the world, there would be peace that would settle over this planet, but it would be the kind of peace that suffocated freedom in Czechoslovakia.” (*Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Richard Nixon, 1969*, pp. 432–437)

which Washington is awaiting with great interest and which will presumably be received shortly after Soviet [Foreign] Minister A.A. Gromyko returns to Moscow from his trip to Cairo (the conversation with Kissinger took place while that trip was in progress).⁴

During the subsequent discussion of the Middle East, Kissinger avoided discussing the specific issues that I had raised, saying that he himself had not yet studied all these issues in depth because he had been so occupied with Vietnam, but that, if necessary, he would be prepared, in about a month or a month and a half, "to personally get involved" in the Soviet-U.S. talks on these matters, on condition that he would not take over Sisco's responsibilities with respect to all the minutiae and details. He, Kissinger, could meet privately with me for a comprehensive discussion of "key issues" we might raise in regard to a settlement, and then provide his personal report and recommendations to the President. According to Kissinger, depending on the course of events and other circumstances, that report could serve as the basis for additional instructions from the President to the State Department for a further exchange of views with the Soviet side, without any reference to the conversation with the Soviet Ambassador. He added that, in his view, in order to achieve success, it was necessary for all parties (the Arabs and Israel) "to swallow the bitter pill of certain compromises." However, Kissinger did not go into details.

He also said that the President anticipates that all these issues regarding a Middle East settlement will be the subject of a detailed discussion between A.A. Gromyko and Secretary of State Rogers during the UN General Assembly.

Following all these remarks, Kissinger turned to the *issue of Vietnam*, which, from all indications, is currently uppermost in the minds of the President and his principal advisors.

During a detailed exposition of their position on the Vietnam question, Kissinger essentially repeated all the main thoughts and arguments Nixon

had presented to me during my last meeting with him at the White House in May,⁵ as well as everything that Kissinger had said earlier, on instructions from the President, for transmission to the Soviet Government.

There was a somewhat new note, however, in that there was a *more direct appeal to us* to assist in overcoming the current impasse in Paris.

After remarking that the U.S. Government continues to appreciate everything positive that the Soviet Union has already done to support the Paris talks, Kissinger went on to say that, speaking frankly, they are, however, gaining the impression that in recent months Moscow has been less actively involved in the negotiations and has evidently left them almost entirely to the discretion of the Hanoi leadership; in any event Soviet influence on the negotiations has become noticeably less than the leverage the USSR ought to have with Hanoi and the South Vietnamese NLF, including as their main source of arms and economic assistance. Of course, we are well aware of Moscow's principled approach that it does not negotiate for the DRV or the NLF. But, he noted in passing, as it were, that all of the above nevertheless raises a question among some of Nixon's advisors, which they are asking with increasing frequency at White House meetings: "Doesn't Moscow currently believe that continuation of the war in Vietnam will, nevertheless, ultimately be beneficial to it for a number of reasons, and that, therefore, there should be no hurry in resolving the conflict?"

According to Kissinger, he himself and President Nixon do not share this view. They think Moscow is interested in ending the war because the war is costing it a great deal of money and because the Vietnam conflict is a major stumbling block that must be removed if one is to think about truly major improvement in Soviet-U.S. relations.

Clearly in this same context, Kissinger went on to address the issue of *China*. After recalling the thought Nixon had expressed to us earlier, to the effect that they do not intend to interfere in any way in the current Sino-Soviet conflict, and after reaffirming that this is a matter of principle and will not change, Kissinger said that, of course, they are not averse to improving relations with China and are prepared to take "reasonable steps" to meet

⁴ While Dobrynin was in Moscow for consultation, Soviet Chargé Cherniakov met Rogers on June 17 to deliver a Soviet document of "Basic Principles" in response to previous American proposals on the Middle East, including the "preliminary document" of May 6 (see footnote 2, Document 18). (National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 649, Country Files, Middle East, Middle East Negotiations, June 1969; and AVP RF, f. 0129, op. 53, p. 399, d. 6, l. 113-124)

⁵ May 14.

China halfway, but this must be a two-way street. However, according to Kissinger, a careful analysis of the decisions of the last Congress of the CPC and subsequent events has not yet given them, the Americans, any evidence at all that the Peking leadership is prepared to take a somewhat more conciliatory line toward the U.S.

It is true, he added half ironically, that the USSR has now taken our place as the main target of Chinese criticism, and we are now in second place, as it were, but as for the rest, Peking's attitude toward us has not noticeably changed. The Chinese continue to insist that Taiwan be turned over to them. The U.S. cannot agree to that, even though it has no objection to some discussion of this problem between Peking and Taiwan itself; but thus far the latter has not expressed such a desire and the Nixon Administration will not exert any pressure in that regard. Taiwan is still an important link in the chain of bases to deter Peking's expansionist tendencies.

However, that is not the main point, Kissinger asserted. We are realists. The main power in the socialist camp, both militarily and industrially, is not China, but the Soviet Union. That will be the case not only now, but throughout Nixon's presidency. To be frank, in that sense our main rival is the Soviet Union, if we are talking on a global scale and especially about the possible consequences for the U.S. if a nuclear war is unleashed. That is why Nixon believes it is, above all, important to maintain good, or at least more or less normal, proper relations with the USSR, without allowing those relations to reach the brink of dangerous tension.

We understand, he continued, that there are evidently people in Moscow who believe that the U.S. and China might somehow make a deal based on opposing the Soviet Union. From an overall historical perspective, and taking into account the past experience of various countries, such an idea could sound fairly convincing. However, Kissinger asserted that if one were to speak for the U.S. Government, in this specific situation it would, above all, not be in the United States' own interest to frame the question in this way.

Kissinger went on to say that it would, of course, be hypocritical to assure you—and you would not believe us anyway—that we are greatly distressed by your growing differences with the Chinese. However, here there is one significant circumstance to which Nixon attaches considerable importance. The President is certain that the best course for him is, without

openly siding with either the USSR or the PRC, to be particularly careful not to give the Soviet Government reason to believe that the U.S. somehow supports China in its anti-Soviet policy or that it is seeking agreement with Peking based on such a policy. As a realist, Nixon's logic is simple: the Soviet Union is much more able to oppose the U.S. in various regions of the world than is present-day China; this could create situations that pose a threat of conflicts in which the security of the U.S. as a nation could be at stake if a large-scale war were to break out. In terms of its military and economic potential, China cannot pose such a threat to the U.S. for a number of years yet, whereas the Soviet Union can.

Moreover, Kissinger added, Mao Tse-tung's actions cannot be assessed using rational logic. One might expect anything from him, although thus far he has clearly avoided everything that could provoke a direct military clash between China and the U.S. (this does not apply to clashes in third countries). The Soviet Union is a different matter; it is led by political figures who think realistically and who are interested in the welfare of their people and their country. With them specific agreements are possible, in the interests of both countries and others as well. That is why at one point President Nixon already expressed to the Soviet leadership the thought that if, over the next 10–15 years, our countries succeed in uniting their efforts, or even in at least proceeding along appropriate, parallel courses on the most important and dangerous issues, then it will be possible to keep the world from being drawn into major military conflicts, until China "grows up" and more responsible leaders come to power in Peking.

However, according to Kissinger, this requires a prompt end to the Vietnam conflict, and the Soviet Union must now play a more active role in reaching a settlement "without delegating everything to Hanoi, which assesses the entire international situation only from its own specific, narrow viewpoint, and, objectively speaking, this viewpoint often serves mainly the interests of China."

Everything Kissinger said as he reiterated his arguments centered on this main theme. One got the feeling that he was under instructions from Nixon to lay out for us precisely this line of argument, although in so doing Kissinger appeared to be expressing his own thoughts.

I again set forth for Kissinger our principled approach to resolving the Vietnam conflict. I empha-

sized that we are genuinely seeking an early end to the war in Vietnam, but that the legitimate rights, interests and aspirations of the entire Vietnamese nation must be taken into account. I also said that the unrealistic U.S. policy in Vietnam merely plays into the hands of Mao Tse-tung and his group and hinders the establishment of a truly independent and neutral South Vietnam, as proposed in the well-known 10 Points put forward by the South Vietnamese NLF.⁶ The sooner Washington understands this, the better it will be for Vietnam and for the U.S. itself, as well as for the relations between our countries.

However, Kissinger continued to defend the program put forward by Nixon for “settling” the Vietnam conflict, repeatedly stressing that they are prepared to discuss “any proposals and to seek compromises,” if Hanoi and the NLF will finally begin serious negotiations, rather than repeating “only their own ultimatums.” After mentioning “compromises,” Kissinger noted that here there could be “various options that could be discussed confidentially,” but he added that they “cannot, however, abandon Thieu right now because that would be political capitulation to [North] Vietnam.”

In the course of these remarks Kissinger again commented (as Nixon had earlier) that if Hanoi is going to endlessly “obstruct” the negotiations, then in a few months the government will have to think “about other alternatives in order to convince Hanoi.”

I said firmly that there are not, and cannot be, any alternatives to peace talks and a peaceful settlement, unless the current administration wants to repeat the previous administration’s mistakes; what those mistakes led to is quite well known, as shown by the example of the previous occupant of the White House.

Kissinger clearly did not want the discussion to become contentious and turned the conversation to another topic. However, one cannot fail to note that “other alternatives” are a fairly persistent theme in my conversations with both Nixon and Kissinger. Even though at this stage these statements are evidently more in the nature of an attempt to blackmail the Vietnamese and, in part, the USSR with hints that at some point Nixon might resume bombing of the DRV or take other military action, by and large,

one cannot totally rule out such steps by the current administration if, in Nixon’s view, the situation warrants them. Nevertheless, one should be prepared for such a development, especially if Peking’s policy of provocation against the USSR intensifies and Washington believes that, in this sense, the situation could prove disadvantageous for Hanoi. At one point Kissinger made a comment, which was apparently deliberate, to the effect that if they do indeed have to resort to “other alternatives,” they hope that Soviet-U.S. relations will not drop below a “dangerous minimum” because, for their part, they will not do anything that could in any way be detrimental to the Soviet Union itself, or to its authority. I told Kissinger that a U.S. attempt to resolve the Vietnam issue by military means is inevitably doomed to failure and that such a course of action will undoubtedly bring about an overall increase in international tension, which also cannot but affect our relations with the U.S.

In general, the conversation left the definite impression that, for Nixon, foreign policy problem No. 1 remains how to find a way out of the Vietnam War on terms that would be acceptable to him and that would ensure his re-election to the office of President of the United States. To all appearances, his attempts to “convince” the USSR to help in resolving the conflict will continue, and, presumably, this will to some extent also be felt during our negotiations with this administration on other international issues—if not directly, then at least in a certain slowdown in the pace of such negotiations or the resolution of other issues.

Kissinger said that, after my return, he would again like to discuss the broad range of issues concerning our relations and the entire international situation. I agreed.

A few words about *Kissinger* himself. In observing the activities of Nixon and his main foreign policy advisors (and I am now acquainted with practically all of them), it can be stated with a good deal of confidence that at the moment Kissinger is the main—in fact, the dominating—influence on the President in the area of foreign policy. Kissinger is in charge of gathering and personally reporting to the President all foreign policy materials (including intelligence data) received by the White House. Along with his hand-picked staff of 25 experts on various issues, he prepares the agenda and the materials for discussion at the National Security Council chaired by the President (under Nixon this body has begun

⁶ See footnote 3, Document 22.

operating on a regular basis, meeting at least once or twice a week). Nixon himself admits, as he told me during our last meeting, that Kissinger “pesters” him (i.e. visits him) on a daily basis, considerably more often than any of his other assistants.

Judging by my personal observations and comparing, for example, President Johnson’s relations with his assistant Rostow, I can say that Kissinger conducts himself much more freely in the presence of the President than did his predecessors; one feels the definite confidence of someone who has already gained for himself a firm position in the White House (at the State Department they say bluntly that if “Henry” (Kissinger’s first name) is against a particular proposal, Nixon will almost certainly reject it).

Kissinger himself, though he is an intelligent and erudite person, is at the same time quite vain, and in conversations with me (we have developed a fairly good personal rapport), especially during a private lunch, he is not averse to boasting about his influence. For example, during our last conversation he stated without excessive modesty that in all of Washington “only two people can, at any given moment, provide a precise answer concerning the U.S. position on a particular issue: those two people are President Nixon and Kissinger himself.” In this connection, he suggested to me that if something genuinely important needs to be clarified “so that Moscow correctly understands Nixon’s policy on a specific issue,” I should unofficially get in touch with him directly.

It should be said that he himself willingly receives the Soviet Ambassador or comes to our Embassy for a one-on-one conversation immediately after we suggest it. He frequently initiates such meetings himself. Evidently, he is using all this to reinforce his own authority with Nixon as the confidential channel of communication with the Soviet side. It should be noted in this connection that Kissinger exercises personal control over all contacts between members of his staff and personnel of our Embassy and keeps close track to ensure that these conversations are reported to him personally, and if he feels it necessary, he himself reports to the President. Lately he has, in general, noticeably tended to restrict such contacts and, for the most part, direct them exclusively to the channel of his personal contacts with the Soviet Ambassador.

In the future it would, presumably, be advisable to develop and utilize the Kissinger channel even more actively in order to exert influence and

communicate our views on various important issues through him to President Nixon personally, especially in situations of a somewhat sensitive nature or where publicity is undesirable, something which very often cannot be achieved by working through the State Department. Of course, all routine and official business, particularly where it is necessary to go on record with our position, should continue to be handled through normal diplomatic channels. Secretary of State Rogers is noticeably beginning to gain power and is becoming more active in U.S. foreign policy, relying on the extensive apparatus of the State Department and overseas institutions. However, judging from all our own observations and the available information, one should also take into account that, for the time being, Kissinger’s influence on the formulation of Nixon’s foreign policy remains predominant.⁷

A. Dobrynin

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Meeting Between Secretary of State Rogers and Foreign Minister Gromyko

SEPTEMBER 22, 1969

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

New York, September 22, 1969, 10–11 p.m.

U.S. Participants

Secretary William P. Rogers
Ambassador Charles W. Yost
Mr. Gerard Smith
Mr. Richard F. Pedersen
Assistant Secretary Martin J. Hillenbrand
Assistant Secretary Joseph J. Sisco
Assistant Secretary Samuel DePalma
Deputy Assistant Secretary Emory C. Swank
Mr. William D. Krimer, Interpreter

⁷ A typed note at the top of the first page of the memorandum reads: “Distribute to members of the Politburo of the CC CPSU and candidate members of the Politburo of the CC CPSU. July 12, 1969. A. Gromyko.”

¹ Source: National Archives, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL US–USSR. Secret; Exdis. Drafted by Krimer and approved by Brown. The meeting was held in Suite 42A of the Waldorf Towers.