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EO. 12958  
BY: 81 NARA DATE: 4-12-01

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TELCON

Amb. Dobrynin/Kissinger

9:10 a.m. 5/11/71

K: I just had a talk with Gerry Smith and apparently our channel is not working properly. Semonov is going along accepting my proposition to you which Gerry Smith doesn't know about. Semonov has not said what it is but it's the main lines of my proposition to you. The President will be beside himself because we haven't got a reply yet to our proposal.

D: Semonov didn't have instructions and I have a telegram that says it.

K: Semonov on a boat trip <sup>large</sup> went into great detail and Smith is so surprised that he has propositions we didn't make to him. Proposed ABM agreement, a freeze on offensive missiles -- Smith never heard of it. He hinted that you would accept a ceiling on ~~xxx longer~~ ones within this. Smith thinks he will conclude this simultaneously. <sup>He</sup> didn't object to the proposal but it isn't easy that when he makes a proposal to the Council of Ministers and gets no answer.

D: He has no authority.

K: We are in the position now that as far as Smith is concerned a Soviet proposition exists and the President doesn't have a response to his proposal.

D: They haven't discussed it in the govt. I know what I am telling you. The Minister directed him and he is not authorized. Gromyko is not deceiving me.

K: The President can only conclude one of two things. Either there's confusion in Moscow which we don't believe or a deliberate attempt to mobilize his people against him or by-pass him.

D: It's not so. On this matter Semonov has no authority. What he makes a hint -- I don't know.

K: In order to keep our channel intact and avoid on either side a refusal ? ? ? Now we are in a position that as far as I am concerned it has to be treated formally. Smith is telling everyone what Semonov said. ~~That~~ That there should be an ABM ~~agreement~~ agreement and a less formal phrase -- we have discussed it and it's all right. A ceiling which would include large missiles and radar limitations.

D: I don't know what's going on. ~~Does~~ Does he really make a proposal or just a talk and he picks it up piece by piece.

K: He talked with Smith alone.

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D: Was it a proposal or picked up by Smith?

K: Smith thinks it's a proposal and since it's never been discussed by me and Smith never knew ~~and~~ or authorized to discuss it -- if Smith had proposed it -- well, you know. But it's so close to what you and I have discussed -- what is the Soviet position and secondly, you may do this deliberately but the President will take this as a personal affront.

D: It's not necessary.

K: What would Brezhnev think if he proposed to us through a channel and we went a subordinate official and made a reply.

D: Only two days ago we got a copy of a telegram where he was denounced in strongest way. I have known Gromyko for 20 years. I am just telling you. It's for my information but it was not for yours. I have the telegram. Direct information from my talk with Haig. It's not to mislead me. Why would they? It's for my information and it's for the record.

K: We have the serious problem now --

D: ? ? ? reply.

K: We have to construct a reply from Smith to Semonov and I can't say it's not the Soviet position because no one knows I have talked with you.

D: I know the story and you must say what you will to the President. Semonov when I was in Moscow he was told not to talk.

K: I don't understand it. You can ~~refuse~~ reject the proposal but why when we are trying to do so many things -- Smith talked about the summit but he might have gotten that himself.

D: Only two days ago I \_\_\_\_\_ that emphasized the same point. If you do not believe it --

K: There's no sense in your lying. I just want to be sure you want to work with me.

D: This case they discuss through you and me. No reason for misleading me.

K: I now have a message. The problem you have to remember and Moscow must understand is that Smith wants to go to Vienna and give an answer to Semonov.

... probably wants to correct it and made it worse.

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K: He went further. Spelled it out in detail. In a telegram two junior members went into detail with Gartov. I will show you.

D: I believe you. He didn't reply to what you proposed.

K: He replied without saying what it was.

D: We didn't discuss the text.

K: No, not a text. He made a proposal identical to what you and I discussed with details.

D: Formally or in discussion?

K: In private discussions with Smith. He described it as elaboration of what he said at dinner. Two junior members spelled out what Gartov said -- freezing and safe guard sites and discussed what a safeguard site might be acceptable.

D: They have that on instructions. Probably we don't understand what they are talking about. Their delegation there has own instructions -- they know nothing about our discussions.

K: They don't mention our discussions. They made a proposal. If we defend ABM 4 is not acceptable but two would be acceptable. Deliberate that Soviet position only refused 4 and 3. How about 2? They said it was deliberate that they mentioned 4 and 3.

D: You have to understand if you base on 4 or 2 they have *agreed*.

K: You can argue with me but the fact is our government believes you have made a formal proposition to which we have to reply and the President believes he made a proposition to you and you are replying in a bureaucratic channel and he will think you are trying to box him in. It's not going to be considered a friendly gesture.

D: What can I say when I tell you it was not an intention? What ~~xx~~ else can I tell you? Just a delegation fishing. 4 or 2 sites when I know for sure -- otherwise why would we wait so long?

K: Unless you want to ignore the President.

D: We are not children. We know who is boss.

K: It's incomprehensible to me.

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D: We know who is boss in the WH.

K: I will grant that this was done in good faith on your side. The fact is we now have a problem because we have to give Smith a formal instruction. I don't know really. We can play it your way. Make a proposal to Semonov they we have made to you. No sense any more in discussion. We have to make a reply. I can't say that this -- to ignore Semonov.

D: I know he has no authority.

K: Why don't you do the following. It's a Soviet problem.

D: No problem.

K: What should we do?

D: Was it an official proposal or a guess of Smith? Semonov can discuss many things for 5 hours and you can construe what you want and he will say he said nothing. Was it formal?

K: No. Semonov made the proposal that Haig showed you.

D: It said that Mr. Semonov hinted. This point -- Semonov will say they didn't understand me.

K: If it stopped there, no problem. On Friday -- I will \_\_\_\_\_ you. Take the proposal that Semov made because it's very important.

D: Who said?

K: I will get you the memos. On Sunday on the ~~boat~~ boat Semonov went into great detail. Smith talking with -- all right first. I will read the first paragraph. May 6 -- "At dinner for the Soviet delegation May 4 Semonov from a written brief and new instructions introduced coupling of offensive ? ? ? ? ? ? ? "

D: I received a telegram on that. What happened next?

K: This is May 6. "At Soviet Reception Timberov and K \_\_\_\_\_ took initiative in taking Gartov aside on new Soviet proposal and they emphasized ? ? ? ? ? to the general approach ? ? ? ? " On the evening of the 6th.

D: What these two boys really -- Semonov wouldn't show them the telegram.

K: On Sunday Semovov spoke with Smith for 5 hours and gave him the details

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D: He went more and more?

K: He did that on a boat and not a plenary session and there's not a record but when a Deputy Minister speaks for 5 hours he must have something to say.

D: It's not necessary. The thing is Semonov could speak for 5 hours is well known in my govt. He can talk on anything he likes. He wouldn't know anything about the military thing but he can philosophize many things. They will be very strongly scolded and he is my friend. Was it a proposal or did Smith think so?

K: It's not a difficulty because ~~now~~ Smith thinks he has and we must now respond. If I do nothing else now you will get a formal answer to Semonov from Smith.

D: A telegram coming in now. Will you hold a minute?

K: Yes.

D: So I will sum up this way. Smith gets a definite proposal and Semonov continued to elaborate. But he didn't say we are ready to make this proposal.

K: He thinks that if we now say all right we accept an agreement on ABM and freeze, he thinks there will be an agreement. Smith feels we can get an agreement along the lines of what you and I talked about. Simultaneous freeze. ABM vs. Moscow. That's what he thinks.

D: No authority because it contradicts his instructions. If I mention this to Gromyko, he will say Smith invented it.

K: Smith believes it's an ABM agreement with offensive freeze concluded simultaneously with limitations on radar and limitations of testing of surface to air missiles (which we haven't discussed).

D: He has instructions not to discuss specifics.

K: I just finished talking with Smith. This is not something he asked Smith to raise with him and not our major issue.

D: I have the telegram. This is a copy from Moscow on what Semonov reports. Acting in accordance with instructions and said nothing more. \_\_\_\_\_ minister and discuss with Smith what we didn't talk through Smith and Semonov (? Semonov emphatically denies he talked with Smith about it.

K: I don't know what to do know.

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D: I could tell you from this telegram that answer to what you proposed is still not approved. This telegram is the second from Gromyko. He emphatically denies it here.

K: What's going to happen -- if we don't straighten this out we will be forced to give a formal answer in Vienna and it will be total confusion.

D: Smith is confused and trying to present a case he didn't know.

K: A case he didn't advocate before. He had other ideas before.

D: Safeguards against Moscow.

K: The he wouldn't get if Semonov --

D: Everything you mentioned was his interpretation.

K: Semonov made those points on the boat.

D: He has his instructions. I don't know whether -- I don't know. Semonov has to follow instructions or he will lose his job. When he denies it I am sure Semonov will not on a second time report the same story. What he ~~was~~ could do if they discussed in detail, he will see how Smith will react and then report back to Moscow. What's important and you should ask Smith was there an official proposal?

K: No text. I will get his memo.

D: It would be helpful to me.

K: I will have it by the end of the day.

D: A brief summary.

K: I have to tell you that the -- your formal position I understand but the fact is that Smith believes sincerely and since he doesn't know I ever discussed it and he has had different ones --

D: I can now finish this telegram. Semonov said he discussed only what was discussed before. He emphasized that he was on previous position which I gave to you before and that freezing would be settled after ABM. You check it. Semonov said simultaneously or before.

K: I can tell you that really there's a hell of a strange feeling. We find it strange that there should be an answer ~~if xxxxxxxx~~ as far down as Gartov. (cont.)

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K: (cont) And Arbatov is going around that the WH channel is not functioning properly. To Ruina and others. He shouldn't even know there is a WH channel.

D: Did he mention who?

K: ~~Mx~~ He mentioned specifically and to people who don't know it.

D: This is strange. I will speak with him.

K: After Haig mentioned to you outside of our channel should stop and there are to more discussions -- the same range of issues. When you make a proposal to me on Berlin and I send Rush to Zorin or ARBAS, M31 rather than answering Gromyko, it would create a bad impression in Moscow.

D: It's very clear that they discussed freezing and so on but they have no instructions to discuss it. Such an idea of freezing would be after ABM is signed. Did anyone tell him or subordinates that this freezing would be before?

K: They think it's manageable. What matters to me is that when you and I have confidential negotiations we agree in principle and then it's presented to our bureaucracy. If in good faith it's not possible that high ? ? ? ? or subordinate officials. Gartov had no instructions.

D: They discuss many things. Fishing with each other. Officials are one thing -

K: You said they were instructed to discuss freezing.

D: No, if it ~~arises~~ arises then Semonov has instructions. If ~~a~~ it arises then it's to be discussed only after.

K: They raised it and we didn't. The way this looks to the President is that we in carrying it out have been very rigid to give your ~~h~~ politburo every opportunity but you do this and if it ~~makes~~ leaks to the press it will look that you are bringing pressure on us. We have explained the point. As far as Smith is concerned he believes that there was a formal proposal.

D: On what?

K: ABM.

D: They have discussed it for 4 months.

K: ABM coupled with offensive freeze.

D: Before or after?

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K: The formal freeze is after but he thinks it's manageable.

D: That's all he said?

K: Semonov went into great detail with him.

D: That's why he thinks it's manageable.

K: That's what he thinks.

D: I can tell you you have nothing. This <sup>decision</sup> ~~discussion~~ was not made. You have to accept it or not.

K: It's not in the good of our relationship that while you and I are discussing something, subordinates are discussing the same thing.

D: ? ? ? you said no. I have what he said officially. We cannot accept ABM without an offensive. So he asked what are the compromises and one said something about freezing. Semonov probably said OK, we will do it afterwards. This was the position two months ago. He didn't know it.

K: It's known to me but no one here knows we decided this.

D: We sent our delegation -- agreement on ABM. What do you want then? Your delegation says ? ? ? ? .

K: You make up your mind with whom you are talking. If it's me, we will instruct our delegation.

D: We have not reached a decision on the proposal. Therefore, we can tell our delegation to do nothing.

K: You could. (You could discuss ABM).

D: But your delegation refused to discuss ABM. Then we will have to go back ~~that~~ through official negotiations. It's a question of the real thing.

K: The President feels in our discussions we have had that this could have been a good turning point. We have to succeed sometimes. He has tried to be very careful of your concerns and we are now in this position which in fact will be treated in our govt. as a formal Soviet proposal. What Semonov did was propose the last draft of the letter you brought me from Moscow. <sup>Not</sup> ~~the~~ the one I suggested. It has to look to the President as if rejecting it, you have introduced it to our bureaucracy (to see what they do).



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D: That makes no sense.

K: It embarrasses the President.

D: ? ? ? ?

K: What Semonov proposed was what you brought back from Moscow.

D: What he could say from instructions was ABM and only that.

K: That was in the letter.

D: No it went about before freezing.

K: No, it's what I asked you to put in.

D: That part that I said fine if we ? ? ? ?. Otherwise it was all right with you. Just the two points and we announced it two weeks ago.

K: Are you telling me that you are accepting the two agreements should be signed simultaneously?

D: Before signing on ABM we will reach details before signing the agreement. First we have to sign ABM and its details. That's Semonov.

K: ~~Nx~~ Just look at the mess this creates. By Semonov raising this. Suppose Smith backs this position, we will have a problem here.

D: Semonov has instructions that are two months old deliberately. Any decisions on freezing would be after ABM signed.

K: I think we understand the problem.

D: What he said was this should be done before the signing. On this point Semonov couldn't say a point.

K: So it's the one sentence.

D: If you accept it but you made it again difficult. Those two points. The govt. is meeting. I am now waiting. I have to receive an answer on this point. Otherwise you said it was acceptable to you.

K: I have explained to you the impression it makes here. I understand but it will be hard to explain. Such fine points it will be hard for our people to follow it. I understand it and you can report it to Moscow.

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D: I don't know what to report. Semonov only reported something two months old.

K: Smith thinks it's a formal proposal. This will force us to respond in plenary session. Then you reject it and everyone knows we have a deadlock.

D: We can work it. Semonov is telling you a position two months old. There's nothing about the proposal that's new. Only two men here know.

K: It's funny that what he thinks is what I know to be true.

D: The difference between us was before or after ABM, the freezing. You raised it last moment less \_\_\_\_\_ the two cities. We have done what your govt. has asked. Semonov said nothing about that.

K: I told the President three weeks ago that you were making (promising) moves and we were going to make progress. It will raise --

D: They are talking different things. It's an old position.

K: I can hold Smith here until Tues of next week. If we don't have a reply from you we will have to give him a reply. You know what it will be and it will be in that channel.

D: I can make it easier. You listen to Smith and ask him the crucial question. Does he understand?

K: He thinks it can be negotiated.

D: Then let's discuss it with Semonov again and ~~repeat~~ repeat it. He will say it will be ~~no~~ no. You will have an official answer from me. Semonov will not have it officially. Then they can clarify the points. He can ask before or after. Then you will have reply. It will be for their own amusement.

K: I will discuss it with the President. It's a bureaucratic fine point. The fact of the matter is that in a matter we have handled with discretion here is now a part of the record of our bureaucracy. It creates internal problems for us which we can handle but we could have gone to Semonov first.

D: You can do that. He can handle it.

K: Do you want to deal with the President or the bureaucracy?

D: Semonov says he discussed what was before.

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K: I understand.

D: Now you do not care but it was a major point for two months. This was a point. Then I brought you an answer, yes, and Semonov is discussing after the decision.

K: I tell you honestly that the President will <sup>not</sup> engage in many more exchanges when it gets so complicated. He will probably decide to handle it formally.

D: I tried to explain to you but you don't listen. The disagreement was whether to accept before or after.

K: The ~~xxxx~~ crucial point is after 2 and a half years and months of discussions with you and me, we will get something important. We are one sentence away from that. One sentence that commits you to nothing. At that precise moment the issue goes into the bureaucracy and deprives ~~it~~ it of the symbolic thing which could have had or a start in our relationship for significant progress. All the rest is legalistic. You can say he stayed within the instructions. I will not accuse him of not. But while the President is waiting for a reply from you to receive 3 telegrams in succession that Soviet diplomats discussed what he is waiting for and that Soviets have made no move, he will not understand. You can explain or I can but he doesn't read --

D: Your President can be told it's ? ? ? ? .

K: The idea made on freeze before this.

D: After or before this is it really. Our delegation (discussions) are ~~xxx~~ 3 months old.

K: Our delegation doesn't even know about the freeze.

D: Whether on or off the record it's 3 months old.

K: You will find the correct way of reporting our feelings.

D: I don't see what it is. Semonov didn't raise after the decisions.

K: He talked for 5 hours. ~~xxxx~~ Smith considers it important enough to tell the Secy. of State, Secy. of Defense and the President. Smith isn't a fool. He doesn't report to these people unless he thinks there's a new proposal. Whether legally Semonov stayed within his ~~x~~ instructions.

D: You check with Smith if it was before or after.

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K: He is ~~xxx~~ just ~~xxxxx~~ one exchange behind you and me.

D: We can have agreement 4 months ago. You raised this question.

K: <sup>D</sup>o you want the President to think that after he turned it down you are then raising it with one of his diplomats to see if they will raise it?

D: Why? Our diplomats don't know what's going on through this channel.

K: After Haig talked with you it's raised two more times. After I raised (another item) you stopped it. (So it can be done.)

D: ~~xxxxxx~~ He didn't say anything on the crucial points.

K: Sure, he raised something ~~xxxx~~ that was turned down.

D: You will turn it down again?

K: Of course. (I would like to see what would happen if you in our channel opposed something and then we raised it in a lower level.)

D: He has no instructions. It's just talks. Feel out the timing.

K: It's a curious coincidence. Smith said it was a written brief and some new instructions.

D: It's Smith's interpretation. He didn't have any new instructions.

K: You are doing a great job.

D: You don't have to believe me. It's a very sensible explanation. They don't know what's going on. How could we believe that a second rate diplomat can make a decision you cannot get from the President?

K: There are 50 explanations.

D: They don't know what's going on! Why go through you or Smith on a 3 month old position?

K: You have to believe me. Our feeling here is -- I talked with the President on the basis of the two cables yesterday. We just have a grave doubt whether there is an attempt to make a departure and we can <sup>not</sup> see this as good faith.

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D: If you accepted text --

K: We never agreed on NCA. We want each side to reserve their position.

D: Our govt. has not decided.

K: That's where we will be in practice. Even if you don't agree, we will adopt the decision.

D: I can/<sup>not</sup>make the de~~ci~~on for the govt.

K: While you were discussing it and while we were stopping the bureaucracy process to decide it they can throw in new things for them. (?) The fact I heard it 3 months ago means nothing.

D: You only have to discuss ABM. You can tell them.

K: You can waste two weeks if you want.

D: It's the decision about after.

K: The only thing -- we are going over old ground. I have told you what will happen. I will hold Smith until Tues. We will have to send him back with new instructions. You can decide if it's handed in Vienna or here.

D: I am not responsible for there. If you want \_\_\_\_\_ it's all right with me and my govt. You can tell Semonov no. We don't care.

K: But it's a problem here because our officials will run around --

D: Tell Smith to check with Semonov again. Then just say we cannot accept this after. Then say before we will discuss. Semonov will say no. ~~He doesn't~~ doesn't know about this and it will be closed chapter. It will happen. I know. You are looking suspiciously of things that are not.

K: In Smith's mind it's a new offer and it's considered bad faith by the President as if we tried to work with you. I can produce a stalemate 50 ways in Vienna. What's hard ~~for~~ is to achieve progress. Whether you get a reply or not I have not pressed you on that. We wanted silence until it was a reply.

D: You asked me to tell you. I have read the telegram from Gromyko. Semonov has no ~~authority~~ authority.

K: Whether he had authority or not he has produced the impression.

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D: That's difficult to catch.

K: It's the impression that has been created. That impression has made irritation in this building.

D: When you report to the President, report what I have said. Privately between you and me I have a telegram to tell you that Semonov has not authority. What they discussed on freezing. ~~xxxxx~~ On agreements with offensive missiles only after ABM.

K: The fact of enforcing us to reject it is unfriendly. If I surfaced the letter you didn't accept and forced you to reject it --

D: There was no proposal from Semonov. ~~ixx~~

K: Smith has a misapprehension.

D: You can tell Smith you ran into me and --

K: No, it puts me in a position of thwarting initiative.

D: I will talk with Smith.

K: No, just ask that there be no further discussion with Americans at any level until we hear from you.

D: Not to discuss anything ~~xxxx~~ except ABM?

K: Right now we have Smith here.

D: Semonov can receive a telegram to discuss nothing but ABM.

K: There's no way of avoiding instructions to Smith now.

D: No official proposal made of any kind. It's on the record. It's up to you to handle your case. ~~xxxxxxx~~ He didn't mention any specific proposal. It's for your understanding. How you handle it is up to you. How you handle it is your business.

K: Smith goes back next week. If no answer from you I will tell you what his instructions are. I will also tell you then if we are interested in handling it in our channel.

D: That's fair enough.

K: Now that's been thrown into Vienna channel we will have to bring it to a conclusion in ours before it goes further.