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DEPARTMENT OF STATE

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Approved in S
1/28/65

Memorandum of Conversation

DATE: January 19, 1965
Place: Secretary's office
Time: 4:30 p. m.

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SUBJECT: Signals Received of an Explosion
in the Soviet Union.

PARTICIPANTS: The Secretary
Llewellyn E. Thompson, Ambassador-at-Large
Department of State

Ambassador Anatoliy F. Dobrynin, USSR

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The Secretary said that as the Ambassador undoubtedly knew, our Atomic Energy Commission had announced that seismic signals had been picked up of an explosion in the Semipalatinsk region of the Soviet Union. We have now detected radioactive debris showing that this explosion had vented. We believe others will pick up this debris and will be likely to say something. Therefore, we will make a statement today in a low key around six o'clock. The Secretary handed a copy of the statement to the Ambassador. He went on to say it would be helpful to everyone if the Soviet Union would be reasonably frank about this development. He said we can understand circumstances where a test can result in venting. This can result from greater yield of a device than had been expected or from a wrong estimate of the depth necessary to prevent venting or from an accident of some sort.

The Secretary went on to say that if this development represented a change of policy with regard to the Nuclear Test Ban, this would, of course, be another matter.

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The Ambassador said he was quite sure that the Nuclear Test Ban was not involved.

The Secretary said what we needed from Moscow was a frank statement of what happened. He said we would endeavor to see that the press did not play up this matter unduly. The facts that we know are consistent with a "de Minimus" type of problem.

The Ambassador said he understood and would check with Moscow. He pointed out, however, that some of the Russian leaders were away and he was not sure how quickly he could obtain an answer.

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