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By LC/NARA Date 7/19/02

MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE  
WASHINGTONSECRET/NODIS

April 3, 1969

## MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

FROM: Henry A. Kissinger

SUBJECT: Memorandum of Conversation with Ambassador Dobrynin,  
April 3, 1969

Dobrynin called me about 3:30 p.m. to ask whether he might come by for fifteen minutes this afternoon. I received him at 4:30 p.m. and he stayed for an hour.

Dobrynin began the conversation by saying that he had been instructed by the highest level of the politburo to give me an advance indication of a note that was going to be presented at the State Department tomorrow morning. This note in effect presents the Budapest Declaration of the Warsaw Pact nations, and asks for a European Security Conference. (I am sending you a separate memorandum on this.) Dobrynin asked me for my views. I told him a European Security Conference which excluded the United States would meet with strong opposition. Dobrynin said that Moscow has no intention of prescribing the membership; if one of our allies proposed United States participation, Moscow would agree. (This represents a major change in Soviet policy.)

However, it soon became clear that the note was just a pretext. Dobrynin turned the conversation to Vietnam and asked me what I thought of developments. I said we were very relaxed, we knew what we were doing and would not be deflected by public protest. Dobrynin asked me whether we had "any intention of expanding the war." I replied that I had always told him that the President was determined to end the war one way or the other. He could be sure that I did not speak idly and that I hoped Hanoi kept Moscow fully informed of everything that was going on. Dobrynin said: "You know we do not have any advisers at the headquarters in South Vietnam." I replied: "Well, I hope they keep you informed of everything that goes on."

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Dobrynin then asked how I visualized the relationship between a military and political settlement. I decided to play fairly tough and said that we would probably want to discuss military issues first. (I did this to preserve the option of the Vance mission and to have our willingness to discuss political matters within that framework serve as a concession.) I added that we could understand it, however, if after the military issues were settled, Hanoi would make their application dependant on progress towards a political settlement. Dobrynin pretended that this was a major concession and said it put a new complexion on things. He said we had to understand that the NLF was reluctant to risk itself in a forum with the GVN since it considered the GVN determined to destroy it. Dobrynin asked whether I saw any chance of replacing Thieu and Ky. I said no, but we were willing to consider safeguards for the NLF after a settlement. Dobrynin said this was all terribly complicated. The NLF did not insist on a coalition government. It would settle for a peace cabinet (without Thieu and Ky) which would safeguard its members.

Dobrynin then returned to the problem of escalation. I told him it would be too bad if we were driven in this direction because it was hard to think of a place where a confrontation between the Soviet Union and the United States made less sense. I added that it seemed to me our interests in Vietnam were quite compatible. Dobrynin replied: "Our interests in Vietnam are practically identical. We might want a slightly more neutral South Vietnam than you, but it is not an issue of consequence."

Dobrynin then turned to China. He referred to a news story that I was in charge of a policy review of Communist China and asked what conclusions we had reached. I said we had reached no conclusions but the President's thinking was well expressed to Kuznetsov when he said the Soviet Union and the United States still had the power to order events but that they might not have that power much longer. Dobrynin said this was quite right. He added that he hopes things will get better after a while. I said that looking at the problem from a sheer political point of view, I thought China would be a major security

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concern of the Soviet Union no matter who governed it. Dobrynin then said that it seemed to many in the Soviet Union that Formosa could well be an independent state. I did not respond. Dobrynin said he might want to get together in two weeks to review the entire international situation.

Comment:

Dobrynin seemed very insecure when speaking about Vietnam. All of this suggests to me that maybe the Vance mission is our best hope.

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