

MEMORANDUM

TO: Gov. Averell Harriman

FROM: Alex. R. Seith

RE: Soviet Message to President-elect Carter

File
December 3, 1976

*Not prepared in
in front of
Carter's staff,
of his staff "man"
President*

As we discussed, the Soviets approached me (these were Georgi Arbatov, Director of the Institute for USA and Canada Studies, and Radomir Bogdanov, a Deputy Director of the Institute) in Moscow on Friday November 19 to say they wanted to send a message to President-elect Carter. As before, I told them I had no credentials to speak for him. Nevertheless, they asked me to wait in Moscow until the following Tuesday while the message was being prepared. I declined because of prior commitments in Bonn, London and Paris.

On Tuesday November 23, while I was in Bonn, Bogdanov told me by phone that he would come to Paris to deliver the message. I reminded him of my lack of credentials. Later that day I phoned you in Florida.

On Thursday November 25 when Bogdanov met me in Paris I told him your view that such messages should go through the Soviet Ambassador in Washington and I reiterated my lack of authority. He said all this had been considered by those "who make decisions" and that they had decided to send the message in this manner.

He said the message had been reviewed in its entirety and in part personally written by Leonid Brezhnev. He read the message from a hand-written text but gave me no copy. I took notes and read them back to confirm the substance. What follows is a transcript of my notes.

* * *

The Soviet Union strictly adheres to a consistent policy aimed at improving relations with the U.S. Its goal is to achieve this on the basis of peaceful co-existence and mutually advantageous cooperation. The "necessary objective conditions" already exist for developing cooperation "on a firm basis laid down in previous years".

1. "We are fully prepared to cooperate with the new President."
2. "It is very important what political line the new President will pursue. His speeches were closely followed." We approve his statements on arms limitations and arms reductions.

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But, "we could not fail to notice somewhat different declarations which are not consistent with improving relations". These include declarations that he would pursue "a tough line"; that relaxation of tensions is good only for the Soviet Union; and declarations in which "the role and importance of U.S.-Soviet relations are clearly diminished. We wish to believe that all this was said in the heat of an election campaign".

We cannot accept the view expressed during the campaign of the Helsinki agreement. "We believe the Final Act correctly reflected the interest of all parties" and that it is "an integral document and all its provisions must be implemented by all parties".

3. During the election campaign, relations between the Soviet Union and the Socialist countries "were completely distorted". Some statements were seen as "open interference". "We wish to think that these statements do not reflect the views of those who made them."

4. We are devising no "test" for the new President. "We want to make crystal clear that such weapons are not found in the arsenal of our foreign policy. We do not like to experiment with such things. We assume Mr. Carter does not have such intentions either."

5. We view as important Mr. Carter's statements that problems of mutual limitations of armaments and cessation of the arms race should be "pivotal" to Soviet-American relations. "We are of the same mind here. It is obvious that to solve these problems will not be easy. It will take persistent and energetic effort of both sides. On our part, we are ready to make such efforts. It is of no small importance that substantial practical steps have already been made. We believe the first priority is to bring to completion a new long-term agreement on limitation of strategic weapons on the basis of earlier understandings. Being a major step by itself, such an agreement would create the necessary conditions for further advancements on limitations and reductions. We would think it desirable in the interest of putting relations with Mr. Carter on a realistic basis that the President would definitely speak out in favor of a speedy conclusion of a SALT agreement and that his administration take specific steps with this aim in view".

ARS/mz