

MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION, W. AVERELL HARRIMAN AND  
AMBASSADOR DOBRYNIN AT LUNCHEON, N STREET, 3 MARCH 1978

Ambassador Dobrynin answered in the affirmative when I asked him whether he had seen the President's statement on TV yesterday that there was no linkage between SALT and our differences over Africa--that the President stated that progress was being made on SALT, and that only twelve minor questions remain to be settled. He commented, however, that the President indicated that the Congress and the American public would be adversely affected by Soviet actions in Ethiopia. He commented: "They will wonder what is the use of making an agreement that cannot be ratified." He staunchly defended what the Soviets were doing in Ethiopia, among other things saying all the other African nations were approving their actions and the Cubans' actions. I said I knew they favored Ethiopia over Somalia because of Somalia's aggression into Ethiopian territory, which was against African interests, but I did not know whether they approved what the Soviets were doing or the Cuban presence. He admitted he had no direct information on that score.

Again in answer to my questions, he stated that Moscow was emotional in their doubts about what the President's position really was. There had been useful and productive talks between Gromyko and the President in September, but since then, although Moscow had made some concessions, we had not reciprocated. He said Moscow did not know whether

the statements coming from the White House were made for domestic political considerations and not for relations with the USSR.

The Ambassador said that we could get things done with the Soviet government privately, but that Moscow reacts publicly and adversely if the United States makes critical public statements. He indicated that there were a number of problems that had arisen which had adversely affected our relations. He referred to the Indian Ocean talks as an example.

He said there was the worst emotional feeling towards the administration than at any time in the last ten years. It was very basic. Moscow did not understand what the administration was up to. It was not any single subject, but a number of them. I pressed him for examples. He stated that Goldberg had told their representatives in Belgrade that he had been given full freedom of action. Moscow feels that Goldberg's statements were deliberate to gain domestic political advantage by being loudly critical of the USSR. He maintained Goldberg's statements were deliberate attempts to censure the Soviet Union. Dobrynin had tried to make explanations to Moscow on Goldberg's behavior, but failed. Moscow has felt the U. S. administration does not care about USSR/US relations. He further maintained that his government had been ready to talk privately about civil rights problems, but Goldberg's public accusations made this impossible and that ended all progress.

On SALT he emphasized the meeting between Gromyko and Carter was excellent. Both sides had made concessions and much had

been achieved. However, after that Warnke had no initiative to make any further concessions in the negotiations on a give-and-take basis. At Geneva the Soviets had given in on a number of small points but had received nothing in return. There is an impression of uncertainty now as to what our policy is. Is the administration serious in wanting an agreement? They are concerned that Carter has domestic preoccupations. The question is asked whether he wants to wait until next year.

Regarding the public attack on North Africa, he pointed out that the Kremlin has been careful never to implicate SALT, but now the U. S. has linked SALT with Ethiopia. The Kremlin thinks the White House is acting as if it believes SALT was more important to the Soviet Union than it is to the United States.

He suggested that if we waited until next year, more difficulties may arise. There has already been such a long delay.

Dobrynin emphasized that in his opinion we should press for a quick agreement. He thought with goodwill the outstanding questions could be settled within two months. He suggested that President Carter might send some proposals on settlement on some of the more important questions directly to Brezhnev. He commented that Gromyko might come for the United Nations meeting on May 22, but he felt that was nearly three months off and too late. He suggested two possibilities: 1) that the President communicate directly with Brezhnev on some of the more important

questions on a give-and-take basis, or 2) Vance might meet Gromyko as they have done before, somewhere in Europe, and he felt many of the questions could be settled. He spoke highly of Cy Vance and has confidence in Marshall Shulman.

Dobrynin is afraid that unless something is done, things will deteriorate still further. The Kremlin will perhaps now answer some of the public accusations of the White House and this will lead to more haggling. Public debate will only lead to worse relations. Dobrynin felt that it was important that the President show that he really cared about improving Soviet/American relations, particularly on SALT. In the present mood, the Kremlin is <sup>/afraid</sup> things will worsen. When I suggested that they had been unfairly critical of Sadat, he maintained that Gromyko and Vance had come to an agreement on October 1st that there should be a Geneva Conference in December, but nothing was done.

Among the things he criticized us for doing was our big military buildup of their neighbor, Iran, which annoyed the Kremlin.

Dobrynin brushed aside that the President had made it very plain that he was concerned with an early SALT settlement and specifically stated that there was no linkage with any other subject. He stated again that the President had indicated that Africa could adversely affect Congress and American public opinion, which would make it impossible to get SALT ratified.

-5-

The last few comments were hurried, as Dobrynin looked at his watch and discovered he was late for an important engagement.

All of the above was an expression of his concern. He has hope that something can be done to reestablish our relations on a sound basis, particularly recognizing that SALT was by far the most important subject.

Throughout the conversation I made a strong defense of the administration to each of the points he raised. Dobrynin said that he had passed many of these on to Moscow, but he said he had not been able to change the emotional atmosphere that existed in Moscow today.