

July 16, 1969

**Record of a Conversation [with] H. Humphrey in the
Izvestiya Newspaper's Editorial Offices**

Citation:

"Record of a Conversation [with] H. Humphrey in the Izvestiya Newspaper's Editorial Offices", July 16, 1969, Wilson Center Digital Archive, RGANI, f. 5, op. 61, d.672, ll.123-126. Contributed by Sergey Radchenko and translated by Gary Goldberg.
<https://wilson-center-digital-archive.dvincitest.com/document/209171>

Summary:

L.N. Tolkunov and Hubert Humphrey discuss Soviet-American and Sino-Soviet relations, as well as domestic politics in the United States.

Credits:

This document was made possible with support from Carnegie Corporation of New York (CCNY)

Original Language:

Russian

Contents:

Translation - English

Secret

RECORD OF A CONVERSATION [with] H. HUMPHREY
IN THE IZVESTIYA NEWSPAPER'S EDITORIAL OFFICES

On 16 July, in accordance with instructions, L. N. Tolkunov, the editor-in-chief of Izvestiya received Hubert Humphrey, former US Vice President and presidential candidate from the Democratic Party.

In the course of an extensive conversation, the content of which, as stipulated, was not given to the press for publication, H. Humphrey expressed his opinion on the following main questions.

Touching on the problem of Soviet-American relations and the prospects for their development, in particular the question of negotiations on limiting strategic nuclear missile weaponry, Humphrey stressed that for a long time he had been an active supporter of beginning them soon. Noting that the negotiations are already late, Humphrey stressed that he sees two urgent problems at the present moment: when and where such negotiations will begin. Humphrey continued, if we do not deal with this question right now in earnest, then both our countries, continuing the current policy in this area, will come to economic bankruptcy inasmuch, as we now know, the expenses for these "accursed and dangerous things might lead us only to insanity and disaster".

Humphrey also noted that, in his opinion, in these negotiations the question of defensive systems is not so important as the offensive systems. If both countries embark upon the path of producing missiles with multiple independent warheads, their strategists will have to prepare for the worst and confront prospective newer and newer rounds of the arms race.

Humphrey tried to find out whether the Soviet government has already set a specific date for the start of the negotiations. When he did this he noted that the Soviet Union had earlier pushed the American government to begin negotiations, and the American public and Humphrey himself had also previously pushed the Nixon Administration. Now, he said, "the music is already playing from our side, but the girl is not accepting the invitation to dance".

Speaking of his views on the prospects for world development, Humphrey especially stressed the danger of the tension now existing in the Near East which, as he put it, is "troubling" for the American side.

Both we and you, stressed Humphrey, understand that our countries have sufficient men and equipment to destroy one another. At this moment for both sides there is no problem in building up our own might, the problem is how to restrain its use. Humphrey added, there also exists the problem of small countries who might draw us into a conflict, in spite of the desire of the USSR and the US, but by virtue of the obligations which our countries have with respect to the small countries.

Then Humphrey dwelt on the what he called "the reassuring signs in Soviet-American relations". Listing a number of agreements achieved between our countries on specific questions Humphrey stressed: the most important thing is that the American people are more friendly toward the Soviet Union and that both sides have the desire to cooperate. In Humphrey's words, "on the surface" Soviet-American relations might arouse worry. But actually they are better than in 1963, at the moment of his previous visit to the Soviet Union. He expressed the hope that at the present time our countries are entering a zone of more favorable relations with one another.

Most of all, judging from his questions, Humphrey asked about the state of Soviet-Chinese relations. He expressed the fear that in the Soviet Union they view current US policy with regard to China as "conspiratorial". In his energetic expressions Humphrey repeatedly stressed that among the American people and the American leadership there exist more friendly feelings toward the Soviet Union than toward China. China, he said, is a country of enormous potential resources, but for a long time the current regime has acted aggressively with respect to a number of China's neighbors. In his words, the American point of view is that the current regime in China is unstable, aggressive, and prone to irrational acts. He expressed agreement that any circles in the United States which would like to play "the Chinese card against the Soviet Union" will play against American interests. "We don't want you to fall into a catastrophe["], stressed Humphrey. The only thing that we want is for you to help us get out of our misfortunes".

Replying to a question about whether he plans to try and take revenge in the 1972 presidential election Humphrey said that he had not finally decided about this question and that he would decide this winter whether to offer his candidacy for the Senate or governor of the state of Minnesota in the off-year 1970 elections. However, Humphrey stressed further, that regardless of this he will continue to play a very active role in the leadership of the Democratic Party, where he is chairman of the commission on policy planning. Humphrey added that he considers himself a "semi-official" person and that even in his current situation he prefers to play a serious role in American political life.

N. Polyakov, First Deputy Editor-in-Chief; V. Kassis, member of the editorial board; S. Kondrashov, international columnist; and M. Sagatelyan, Deputy Editor of Izvestiya for the Foreign Department took part in the conversation.

the conversation was recorded by: S. KONDRASHOV
M. SAGATELYAN

[their signatures]

Two copies printed

17 July 1969

nk