

June 9, 1970

Memorandum of Conversation between Secretary of State Rogers and Soviet Ambassador Dobrynin

Citation:

"Memorandum of Conversation between Secretary of State Rogers and Soviet Ambassador Dobrynin", June 9, 1970, Wilson Center Digital Archive, From the Six Day War to Yom Kipper: Selected US Documents on the Arab-Israeli Conflict, 1969-1973, a briefing book prepared for the international workshop, "New Evidence on the Arab-Israeli Conflict" (Wilson Center, June 11, 2007).

<https://wilson-center-digital-archive.dvincitest.com/document/240279>

Summary:

A recap of a meeting in which Secretary Rogers and Ambassador Dobrynin discuss proposed formulations to negotiate a peace in the Middle East, and the Soviet Union's involvement in the UAR.

Original Language:

English

Contents:

Original Scan

DECLASSIFIED

Authority E.O. 12958
By AB NARA Date 9/4/02

SECRET/NODIS

DEPARTMENT OF STATE

8144

Memorandum of Conversation

PART I OF III

DATE: June 2, 1970
Secretary's Office
3:00 P.M.

SUBJECT: Middle East

PARTICIPANTS:

The Secretary
Assistant Secretary Sisco
Mr. Dubs, EUR/SOVAmbassador Dobrynin
Yuli Vorontsov, Minister-Counselor,
Soviet Embassy

COPIES TO:

At the outset of the meeting, the Secretary asked about Dobrynin's health. The Ambassador said he felt good.

Dobrynin said he understood that the meeting this afternoon would focus on the Middle East. Nevertheless, he was prepared to discuss other matters, such as European affairs and SALT, in the future at the Secretary's convenience.

Dobrynin said that he had been authorized during his recent consultation in Moscow to inform the U.S. Government that he was prepared to continue discussions on the Middle East with Mr. Sisco. He hoped that mutual efforts would lead to a solution. The Soviet Government was also interested in finding guidelines which Ambassador Jarring could use in the search for a settlement on the Middle East.

Dobrynin then referred to his conversations with Mr. Sisco prior to the latter's trip to the Middle East. Dobrynin noted that the U.S. side had expressed an interest

OC/AD
EUR:SOV:ADubs:erk 6/3/70
(Drafting Office and Officer)

FORM DS-1254
2-69

SECRET/NODIS

REPRODUCED AT THE NATIONAL ARCHIVES

DECLASSIFIED
Authority E.O. 12958
By AD NARA Date 7/1/00SECRET/NODIS

-2-

during those talks in obtaining more detailed formulations on the nature of peace and the obligations which the sides would undertake. At the same time, the Soviet side had indicated an interest in more precise language from the U.S. on the question of withdrawal and other matters. Dobrynin said he was instructed to present formulations on the two points mentioned and that he hoped these points would meet the wishes of the U.S. Dobrynin then handed the Secretary two papers with the following formulations (NOTE: these actually are extensions or modifications of points 3 and 11 of Section II of the Soviet paper of June 17, 1969):

"/Point 3, Section II/

From the moment of deposit with the UN of the concluding document or documents the parties shall refrain from acts contradicting the cessation of the state of war and the establishment of the state of peace, in accordance with paragraphs 10 and 11, with the understanding that, juridically, cessation of the state of war and establishment of the state of peace will begin at the same time of the completion of the first stage of the withdrawal of Israeli troops from the territories occupied during the conflict of 1967."

"/Point 11, Section IX/

The Arab countries, parties to the settlement, and Israel mutually agree

- to respect and recognize the sovereignty, territorial integrity, inviolability and political independence of each other and their mutual right to live in peace in secure and recognized borders without being subjected to threats or use of force;

SECRET/NODIS

DECLASSIFIED
Authority E.O. 12958
By AB NARA Date 9/1/00

SECRET/NODIS

-3-

- to undertake everything that is necessary so that any military or hostile acts, with the threat or use of force against the other side will not originate from and are not committed from within their respective territories;

- refrain from intervening directly or indirectly in each other's domestic affairs for any political, economic or other reasons."

Dobrynin commented that these two formulations along with others they had presented to Sisco previously would stand or fall together. In any event, he expressed the hope that they would remain confidential. The Soviet side looks forward toward movement from the U.S.

Commenting that we would look at the two formulations carefully, the Secretary then recalled his conversation with Dobrynin of March 25 at which time he had noted that the U.S. found the operational involvement of Soviet military personnel in the UAR defenses to be serious and potentially dangerous. The Secretary noted that in reply Dobrynin had expressed the view that Soviet actions were of a defensive nature and that Dobrynin had expressed the hope that the U.S. would be of some assistance in getting the Israelis to desist from deep-penetration raids. Since that conversation, the Secretary noted Israel has halted the deep-penetration raids and Israeli representatives have publicly stated that Israel would observe a cease-fire. In addition, Prime Minister Meir has publicly accepted, during a speech in the Knesset, Security Council Resolution 242. The Secretary said that Israel's position on deep-penetration raids was announced by Israeli Defense Minister Dayan on May 4. Subsequently, on May 26, Dayan went further by indicating that Israeli air activity was being limited to an area 30 kilometers west of the Canal. These moves on the part of Israel represented real progress, and we feel that we have been helpful in this context by urging Israel to cease its deep-penetration raids. Furthermore, in our view, Prime Minister Meir's acceptance of Security Council Resolution 242 provides a basis for negotiations.

SECRET/NODIS

REPRODUCED AT THE NATIONAL ARCHIVES

DECLASSIFIED
Authority E.O. 12958
By AB NARA Date 9/4/06

SECRET/NODIS

-4-

The Secretary then said that the U.S. remained deeply concerned over the increased military involvement of the Soviet Union in the UAR. In view of this concern he wished to convey a statement, the text of which would be provided to the Ambassador after the meeting. The statement, which he wished to convey to the Soviet Government, reads as follows:

"The USSR has indicated that Soviet military activities in the UAR will remain defensive. We want to make clear that we would not view the introduction of Soviet personnel, by air or on the ground, in the Canal combat zone as defensive since such action could only be in support of the announced UAR policy of violating the cease-fire resolutions of the Security Council. We believe that introduction of Soviet military personnel into the delicate Suez Canal combat zone could lead to serious escalation with unpredictable consequences to which the U.S. could not remain indifferent. In this connection, we believe, and I am sure you do, it is neither in the interest of the Soviet Union nor the United States for the Middle East to become an area of confrontation between us."

The Secretary then noted that the Soviet Union had at one point indicated an interest in a cease-fire in the area. The U.S. side would like to renew discussions on this subject with Dobrynin as well as on the general matter of a Middle East settlement. With respect to the continuation of the talks between the Ambassador and Mr. Sisco, we believe this very desirable. We welcome the written formulations provided by the Ambassador and are willing to resume bilateral discussions very soon.

Mr. Sisco noted that the U.S. side would wish a bit of time to review the new formulations and to consider them in the light of papers that had been exchanged previously.

SECRET/NODIS

DECLASSIFIED
Authority E.O. 12958
By AB NARA Date 9/4/00

SECRET/NODIS

-5-

Dobrynin emphasized that the formula on mutual obligations should be kept very confidential. He had no particular problem regarding publicity surrounding meetings but did hope that the substance of the proposals advanced during conversations would not be revealed publicly. Dobrynin noted further that he had no objections to having the fact revealed that new proposals were advanced, so long as the substance was not disclosed. He warned that if the proposals were leaked, the Soviets would not feel bound by them. Mr. Sisco suggested that any public disclosure that new formulations had been advanced would only arouse curiosity and could lead to unwarranted speculation. Mr. Sisco, therefore, suggested that nothing be said publicly on this score. Dobrynin agreed.

The Secretary then asked Dobrynin whether he could provide any clarification regarding the Soviet Union's intentions with respect to Soviet personnel and military equipment in the UAR. Dobrynin replied that he was not qualified to discuss "military details." He referred to the Dayan statements regarding penetration raids and wondered whether these represented personal comments or whether they were sanctioned by the Government of Israel.

Alluding to the Secretary's remarks, Dobrynin said that the only thing that has happened in the Middle East is that deep-penetration into UAR air space and bombardment of heavily populated Egyptian areas by Israel have ceased. This is the only thing which has really changed in the Middle East. He added that the outlook for the Middle East was not very hopeful if U.S. policy was aimed at maintaining Israel's military superiority and Israel's policy of dealing from a position of strength. If, on the other hand, the U.S. wants to find a solution that would be fair to both Israel and the Arab countries, the Soviet Union would be willing to cooperate. Frankly, Dobrynin said, maybe the situation now is a little more equal in the military sense. Perhaps this provides a good opportunity to advance toward a settlement. The Soviet Union feels that the time may be ripe. Dobrynin stressed that the Soviet Union does not feel that anything

SECRET/NODIS

Nixon Presidential Materials Staff
National Security Council Files
Harold H. Saunders Files
Middle East Negotiation Files
Box 1159 Folder 2
ME [Middle East] Settlement,
U.S.-U.S.S.R. Talks, 4/1/70
- 12/31/70

REPRODUCED AT THE NATIONAL ARCHIVES

DECLASSIFIED
 Authority E.O. 12958
 By AB NARA Date 9/4/0

SECRET/NODIS

-6-

has happened in the way of a developing confrontation between the Soviet Union and the U.S. He wanted to assure the Secretary that the Soviet Union does not want such a confrontation, even though he claimed that some forces in the world and pro-Zionist forces in the U.S. would like this to happen. Dobrynin proceeded to repeat that nothing has changed drastically in the situation, looking at it coolly and realistically. A possibility for a peaceful settlement still exists, and there is no doubt from the Soviet side with respect to not wanting a confrontation.

In reply to Dobrynin, the Secretary said there should be no doubt that the U.S. wanted a fair and equitable solution. Our formulations of December 9 indicated that. These proposals were unacceptable to Israel, and the UAR had not accepted the proposals either. With respect to other comments by Dobrynin, the Secretary said that we felt strongly that a shift in the military situation had taken place. It is conceivable that the Arabs, having felt deeply humiliated in the past, may be in a better frame of mind now. The basic question, however, is whether the Soviet Union and the Arabs really want a peaceful settlement. We feel that we should actively pursue a political solution. The Secretary underlined that any additional actions by the Soviet Union, especially toward the Suez Canal, could be highly explosive and that is why we felt it necessary to make the statement that we did. We believe that the time is ripe to work toward a peaceful settlement and we will work actively toward this end. The Secretary said that he could not think of anything that would be more helpful in improving the world atmosphere at the moment than a peaceful settlement in the Middle East. He reminded Dobrynin that Israel's actions and statements over the past weeks were not totally apart from what we have done in urging Israel to be more flexible in its positions. In addition to the statements and actions he had already referred to, the Secretary cited Foreign Minister Eban's comment that the world would be surprised at the concessions that Israel would make once genuine negotiations got underway. We have not seen anything similarly forthcoming from Nasser's

SECRET/NODIS

Nixon Presidential Materials Staff
 National Security Council Files
 Harold H. Saunders Files
 Middle East Negotiation Files
 Box 1159 Folder 2
 ME [Middle East] Settlement,
 U.S. - U.S.S.R. Talks, 4/1/70
 - 12/31/70

DECLASSIFIED
Authority E.O. 12958
By AD NARA Date 9/4/0

SECRET/NODIS

-7-

side, however, The Secretary said that he hoped the Soviet Union would impress upon the Arabs the importance of a settlement. Otherwise, it can be seen that the fedayeen would become more and more a factor in the situation and unlikely to be subject to the influence of others.

In response to Dobrynin's request, Mr. Sisco said his office would provide Mr. Vorontsov with the text of the statement made by the Secretary as well as information bearing on the statements of Defense Minister Dayan and Prime Minister Meir to which the Secretary had referred.

SECRET/NODIS

Nixon Presidential Materials Staff
National Security Council Files
Harold H. Saunders Files
Middle East Negotiation Files
Box 1159 Folder 2
ME [Middle East] Settlement,
U.S. - U.S.S.R. Talks, 4/1/70
- 12/31/70