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DEPARTMENT OF STATE

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Memorandum of Conversation

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e.o. Newsom
MS-e.o. Shulman
R-e.o. Vest
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DATE: June 16, 1980

SUBJECT: US-Soviet Relations

PARTICIPANTS: USSR: Anatoliy Dobrynin, Soviet Ambassador
US : Secretary of State Muskie
Marshall D. Shulman, Special Adviser to the Secretary

Ambassador Dobrynin had originally requested the meeting before the Vienna meeting with Gromyko but, because of the press of business, it had been deferred until today.

Introductory Exchanges

Dobrynin presented the Secretary a plaque from the Diplomatic Corps.

He presented regards from Gromyko, who had found the meeting with the Secretary at Vienna useful, necessary, and a needed opening of a channel of communications. He then asked when the Secretary might be going to New York for the UNGA, and whether another meeting might be scheduled then. The Secretary said that he was not yet definite about his schedule, but that the matter could be discussed later. Dobrynin said he would be leaving for vacation in the Soviet Union around July 5-- he thought Gromyko would also be taking his vacation then--and would be returning around September 5.

Afghanistan

The Secretary said he had been disappointed with the reply Gromyko had given Watson to his (Muskie's) letter. The reply had not been responsive, perhaps because it had been given "off the cuff" on first reading. The Secretary expressed the hope that Gromyko would digest the letter more thoroughly, and might then be in a position to give a more detailed response to some of the elements in the letter.

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(Drafting Office and Officer)

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The Secretary went on to mention two points in particular which concerned him in the report of Gromyko's reply: (1) We continue to disagree with the Soviet view that the principal aggression comes from Pakistan. It remains our view that the aggression is that created by the Soviet invasion. In any case, we would like to see the Soviet aggression brought to an end. (2) Gromyko emphasized at length his objection to what he apparently understood the letter to suggest, that a government should be established in Afghanistan acceptable to the neighbors of that country. This was a misunderstanding: what the letter said was that a government should be set up in Kabul which was acceptable to the people of Afghanistan. He added that this could be done "with the prompt withdrawal of all Soviet forces from Afghanistan," emphasizing that the word "with" had been carefully chosen.

Dobrynin asked how the word "with" was to be understood, and whether it could be a significant departure from the word "prior," which he had understood to represent the US position. The Secretary replied that this could be a matter for discussion. [In view of the problem of translating "with," which had arisen at the Gromyko-Watson conversation, Dobrynin was asked what Russian word had been used in the copy of the letter sent to him by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. He replied: "nariadu s," which conveys the proper sense of simultaneity.]

The Secretary emphasized forcefully that so long as Soviet troops continued to occupy Afghanistan, it would also be a barrier to the establishment of an independent and non-aligned Afghanistan. His letter, he said, had been worked out carefully with the President in the hope that it would open the way to remove this unfortunate and dangerous problem.

Dobrynin said he thought a solution could be found which would meet both Soviet and American security interests.

Dobrynin said that Gromyko had asked him to obtain any further clarification possible on what the American side had in mind in referring to "some transitional arrangement." The Secretary replied that he had reference to the point in this regard which the President had made at his press conference on February 13; he did not propose at this stage to assign too detailed a meaning to the term, but to raise a general point which, if accepted, could be worked out in the

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course of further negotiations. What we were seeking to do, he said, was to find the outside limits within which negotiations might be possible.

Dobrynin made a further effort in behalf of the Afghan plan. Why, he asked, could not Zia and Babrak sit down together to work things out, as a way of getting things started? The Secretary reviewed the objections previously expressed to the plan, emphasizing that under it, Soviet troops could remain in Afghanistan forever, and this was our objection.

Nuclear Alerts

Dobrynin asked whether the Secretary had anything to say in response to Gromyko's inquiry to Watson about the two recent nuclear alerts in the US. The Secretary explained that while the alerts had resulted from erroneous signals from a computer, these signals could not create a danger of war without the interposition of human judgement, and that in both cases the matter was quickly caught and corrected.

SALT Ratification

The Secretary emphasized that the President was determined not to abandon the ratification of SALT II, nor the objectives of arms control, although the votes needed for the ratification of SALT II were not presently available, given current conditions. Dobrynin asked whether this meant that SALT II was not likely to be ratified before next year. The Secretary said he thought that was a realistic view. Dobrynin said that if the ratification came after the spring of 1981, there would be obvious problems with the timing of the protocol. The Secretary emphasized the importance of mutual restraint in the interim. Dobrynin asked whether this meant restraint in regard to SALT-related matters or general restraint, to which the Secretary replied he had meant, in the first instance, the former.

Other Subjects

Dobrynin said he hoped future negotiations with Gromyko could cover a broader range of subjects than Afghanistan. He asked, as

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an example, whether the US could not find a way of working together with the Soviet Union on Middle East problems, adding that Soviet and American interests were not as far apart in that area as some people seemed to think. He also suggested, on a purely personal basis, that a compromise solution could be found for the TNF issue. In this context, he repeated his regret that no formal answer had been given to Brezhnev's proposal, other than the decision to proceed with the deployment. The Secretary probed to see whether Dobrynin was implying that the Soviet Union was prepared to postpone its theater deployments, but Dobrynin repeated that this was his personal view, and no more. Both agreed, however, that the Afghanistan issue was an unfortunate barrier to the resolution of many issues between the two countries.

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