

MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION, W. AVERELL HARRIMAN
AND PRESIDENT CARTER, WHITE HOUSE, MARCH 8, 1978, 11:45 AM

I had planned to have a few minutes chat with Hamilton Jordan before I spoke with the President, but unfortunately when I arrived at the White House Jordan was tied up with the Vice President. So as I had told Brzezinski I would stop to see him either before or after I saw the President, I went into Brzezinski's office and talked with him for a few minutes. When it was time to see the President at 11:45, Brzezinski accompanied me into the President's office. Brzezinski said that he and Hamilton Jordan were both going to be present during my talk with the President, although Jordan did not join us. (Later on Jordan said that was exactly what he did not want--he wanted the President to see me alone.)

I couldn't be quite as blunt as I wanted to be, with Brzezinski present. I told the President that Brezhnev is very emotional about the deterioration in US/USSR relations. This situation made Brezhnev suspicious and very hard to deal with. We had the same trouble last year, and steps were taken to improve relations. Then our relations had reached a new high point at the time of the President's second talk with Gromyko. The President said they were settling almost everything. I said that I thought if things could have been brought to a conclusion then--if the Panama Treaties had not been in the way--SALT could have been settled

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last autumn. The President said that they had not been delaying SALT. I said that by sending things to Geneva, that delayed it. Anyway, the Soviets think we have been delaying. He said, "I can understand that." I said the Soviets think they have given in and we have given almost nothing. The President agreed.

I told the President that I thought now it was necessary to get these issues back on a high level, preferably between him and Brezhnev. He said "I think we could settle them if we could get together, but Brezhnev does not seem to want to do it." I suggested perhaps a direct communication between him and Brezhnev covering the more important open questions. I told him Dobrynin was going to be recalled next week and that perhaps he should see Dobrynin before he goes to Moscow. I said Vance might talk to Gromyko somewhere in Europe. The President said "What do you think about sending Vance to Moscow?" He said perhaps it might be better for Vance to go to Moscow and talk with Brezhnev. I agreed that might be the way to break the log jam. Then the President and Brezhnev could get together and settle some remaining details. He agreed that we should press for a settlement, and I underlined the dangers of trying to hold up. There seemed to be no doubt in his mind that he wanted a SALT agreement. Zbig made some statement about the difficulty of getting a SALT treaty approved by Congress. I suggested that if we got the agreement the President could then decide when and how to put it before the Senate. The President nodded his agreement.

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We talked about the Horn of Africa situation in rather great detail. I maintained that the more we made demands in public, the more difficult it was for the Soviets to accede. Zbig had made the point that the public was getting stirred up, and I added that we had contributed to stirring the public up. I said I felt we should make the issue as small as possible publicly and be determined to use what cards we had to get the Soviets to pull their advisors and the Cubans out after the Ogaden territories had been retaken, either by agreement or by force, from the Somalis--that we ought to use every influence to make Somalia itself offer to withdraw and the Saudi Arabians and the Shah might be helpful with some sort of face-saving autonomy plan for the Ogaden, which didn't seem to be very difficult as there were so few people living in this vast area. Zbig talked about the dangers of the Cubans and Russians remaining. I had mentioned Eritrea, and he added Sudan, and then I added Rhodesia. I didn't minimize the danger, but I maximized the necessity of dealing privately and keeping the public statements to a minimum and finding a way to get the Somalis to withdraw. I pointed out that when Eritrea gets the Ogaden back from the Somalis, the African people would be keen to see the Cubans and the Russian advisors out of Ethiopia. The President said he realized that, and he added that Mengistu in Ethiopia had made it plain that that was his desire. I emphasized that we needed to put pressure on the Somalis to withdraw. I said we had very few cards to play with the Soviets as long as the Somalis were the aggressors. Therefore I expressed the need to get the Somalis to withdraw.

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I was able to state that the less we said publicly about the Horn the better, and that it was particularly unfortunate that spokesmen in the White House and the State Department made statements, as the press was full of attempts to show a difference between the two points of view. That was about as close as I could come to suggesting that Zbig should be told to stop having press conferences on the subject.

I told the President that I had been invited to dinner tonight alone with Tito at Blair House, and the President urged me to get as much information as I could of Tito's knowledge of the Moscow situation and any advice on how to deal with it. I agreed to let the President know through Brzezinski.

I didn't mention the possibility of my going to Moscow, although both Vance and Brzezinski had previously mentioned it to me. It seems to me it is better for Vance to go as he is authorized to settle some of the outstanding questions regarding SALT and other things. I had a chance to tell him about my efforts to get the scientists to undercut Paul Nitze's ideas that the Soviets were planning a first strike by painting a picture of the disaster to the Soviet Union by our second strike; and also the danger of new generations of nuclear weapons being difficult to monitor and the appalling condition of both sides not knowing what the other was doing, with latent dangers. Incidentally it would destroy all possibilities of nonproliferation. I expressed respect for the President's determination in that field. I told

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him of my talks with Jerry Wiesner and Paul Doty and gave him a copy of the Kistiakowsky article and asked him to read its title, which included in the subtitle the statement that the nightmares of the hardliners were creating an even more dangerous situation and inferred that they were paranoid. Whether he reads the article or not, I think it is of value for him to read the title page.

The President said he thought it was too early to have a committee for SALT like the one for Panama. I said of course it was, but the scientists were the only ones who could destroy the Nitze arguments and that of other hardliners and that could be done in a way to educate the public. He agreed and thought it was worthwhile. I mentioned that the President's scientific advisor, Mr. Press, had been at the Wiesner dinner at N Street, and also Brzezinski, who appeared to agree.

I left the President and told Zbig I wanted to see Hamilton Jordan as he had arranged the meeting. I had a few minutes talk with Jordan. He was upset that Brzezinski stayed for the meeting, as he thought it was scheduled for me alone and thought it should have been that way. I told him I thought that one of the problems was Zbig's press conferences, and I went as far as I could in his presence to tell the President this. He (Jordan) said he wanted to have lunch with me after Panama. I said that I would be away from the 17th to 28th of March, and he said that maybe the following week something could be arranged. Jordan appeared to agree with the positions I had taken in my talk with the President.