

DECLASSIFIED
 Authority E012958
 By WBB NARA Date 7/7/98

MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE

#6584

WASHINGTON

SECRETINFORMATION

January 22, 1970

MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

FROM: Henry A. Kissinger *HK*

SUBJECT: The Soviet Position on ABM Limitation in SALT

There has been increasing speculation and debate over the Soviet position on limiting ABMs in a SALT agreement. Some observers, including members of our delegation, feel there is a good chance the Soviets would agree to a complete ban. Others, however, feel that the Soviet preference is for a limited defense against third countries.

The record of the Helsinki conversations includes evidence to support both sides. The head of the Soviet delegation, Vladimir Semyonov, in his speech of November 28, shifted the Soviet position from a justification of ABMs -- the line Kosygin had taken at Glassboro -- to an admission that a heavy system could be destabilizing by threatening the ability of one side to retaliate. On this basis he outlined three possible approaches:

1. a complete ban; this is possible, he said, because "work on ABM systems is in an initial stage;"
2. "some kind of limited system," based on agreed level determined by the size of the systems, nature of coverage targets defended, etc.
3. a heavy area ABM.

He indicated no preference, but he did say (in oblique reference to Safeguard) that defending strategic offensive weapons with ABMs and other targets "a considerable distance apart" would create uncertainties because of the possibility that such a thin system could evolve into a system "facilitating a first strike."

In private conversations the Soviets confused the picture by making contradictory interpretations. One Soviet official, a specialist on disarmament matters, confirmed that the already-installed Moscow ABM system could be dismantled if there was agreement on a complete ban.

SECRET

DECLASSIFIED ²
 Authority EO 12958
 By 4987 NARA Date 7/7/98

SECRET

-2-

Handwritten: This is what they will insist on

On the last day of the talks, however, a Soviet General clearly indicated that Moscow's preference was for a limited ABM system for protection against third country attacks.

One explanation of this discrepancy, of course, is that these two were reflecting differences between the Soviet arms control viewpoint and the military establishment (though the military is usually careful not to contradict totally the political line).

Conclusions

There is little doubt that the Soviets were concerned over Safeguard, and they apparently had instructions to draw us out by presenting three alternative "models."

It is impossible to draw any firm conclusions, but it seems most likely that their preference is for a limited system capable of providing protection against third country attacks, as General Alekseev indicated.

The Soviets may have mentioned the "zero ABM" possibility to give ammunition to our Safeguard opponents.

SECRET