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SECRET/NODIS**January 31, 1969****EYES ONLY****MEMORANDUM FOR:****THE SECRETARY OF STATE****FROM: Henry A. Kissinger****SUBJECT: Contacts with the Soviets Prior to
January 20**

At the President's request, contact was established with the Soviets prior to the inauguration through meetings between Boris Sedov of the Soviet Embassy and myself. Copies of memoranda of conversation that were prepared on my meetings with Sedov are attached.

The President has asked that this be very closely held.

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ATTACHMENTS:**Tab A -- Meeting of December 18, 1968****Tab B -- Meeting of January 2, 1969**

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DATE: December 18, 1968

PLACE: PIERRE HOTEL

OF CONVERSATION
MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT-ELECT

PARTICIPANTS:

From: Henry A. Kissinger

BORIS SEDOV, COUNSELOR, SOVIET EMBASSY

Subject: ~~My Conversation with Sedov of the Soviet Embassy~~

~~As I indicated to you earlier,~~ I met with Boris Sedov of the Soviet Embassy this evening, ^{and} I made the following points to him:

-- The President-elect meant it when he said that this was to be an era of negotiation not confrontation.

-- The Soviets will find that the President-elect is open minded, precise, and interested in lasting settlements based on the real interests of both countries. Settlements cannot be based on trying to take away the options of the other side. Lasting settlements must reflect real interests.

-- A crucial test of Soviet intentions to improve relations with the US will be whether the USSR accepts a summit meeting between now and January 20. If such a meeting is held, the Nixon Administration will be forced to find some way to make it clear that we will not be boxed in, and that we will move at our own pace at a time we decide to be appropriate. In other words, we believe that the only purpose of a summit meeting now can be propaganda to embarrass the new Administration. We would react accordingly.

-- On the assumption that the USSR will do nothing to disturb the atmosphere either by summit conferences or by fomenting crises, the new Administration is very interested in serious talks. The tendency in the past few years has been to worry about the "atmosphere" of relations between the two great powers. The new Administration is convinced that there are real and substantial differences between the US and the Soviet Union and that it is these differences which must be negotiated.

-- On the strategic missile talks, Mr. Nixon is intent upon an assessment of our strategic position before moving into the negotiation stage. Our analysis of the issue, however, will be influenced by Soviet willingness to negotiate seriously on other questions--particularly Vietnam and the Middle East.

-- Assuming Soviet willingness to negotiate on such issues, arms talks could be held simultaneously. Such judgments will also influence the ratification of the Non Proliferation Treaty, which Mr. Nixon has called a matter of timing.

-- It would be useful to Mr. Nixon if the Soviet Union were prepared to indicate to us a willingness to negotiate on these outstanding issues, and to provide us with some indication of the positions they would take thereon.

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SECRET/NODISMEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

Date: December 18, 1968

Place: Pierre Hotel

PARTICIPANTS:

Boris Sedov, Counselor, Soviet Embassy
Henry A. Kissinger

I met with Boris Sedov of the Soviet Embassy this evening and made the following points to him:

-- The President-elect meant it when he said that this was to be an era of negotiation not confrontation.

-- The Soviets will find that the President-elect is open minded, precise, and interested in lasting settlements based on the real interests of both countries. Settlements cannot be based on trying to take away the options of the other side. Lasting settlements must reflect real interests.

-- A crucial test of Soviet intentions to improve relations with the US will be whether the USSR accepts a summit meeting between now and January 20. If such a meeting is held, the Nixon Administration will be forced to find some way to make it clear that we will not be boxed in, and that we will move at our own pace at a time we decide to be appropriate. In other words, we believe that the only purpose of a summit meeting now can be propaganda to embarrass the new Administration. We would react accordingly.

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SECRET/NODISMEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATIONDate: January 2, 1969
Place: Pierre Hotel

PARTICIPANTS: Boris Sedov, Counselor, Soviet Embassy

Henry A. Kissinger

Boris Sedov, officially counselor of the Soviet Embassy, but in fact a member of Soviet intelligence, called on me today at his request. He had asked to see me during the previous week, but the meeting was delayed because of my trip to Key Biscayne.

Sedov began by saying that the Soviet Embassy had given a copy of their Middle East note to Ellsworth on December 30 because I had warned Sedov against "surprises," and because the Embassy wanted to deal with the President-elect on the basis of complete frankness.

Sedov then read the attached communication ~~(Feb-A)~~. I copied it and read it back to him (he made a few corrections).

I then asked Sedov about the meaning of the phrase: "The Soviet leadership would do their utmost...to ensure ratification by states of the non-proliferation treaty." Did it mean that the USSR would try to create an atmosphere in which ratification of the treaty would be possible in the United States, or was it proposing joint action with the US to secure ratification by third parties. Sedov replied that both meanings were intended. I said we were studying the problem.

Sedov then asked about strategic arms talks. I repeated my observation of December 18, 1968, that we did not believe that political and strategic issues could be completely separated. The Nixon Administration wanted to see more progress in Vietnam and the Middle East before committing itself to strategic arms talks. Sedov asked whether the Soviet overture on the Middle East could be seen as a sign of good faith along the lines of my communication of December 18. I said we would have to study it.

Sedov then turned to Vietnam. He asked whether my mutual withdrawal proposal was the policy of the new Administration. I replied that we were studying all realistic options. Sedov then said that he considered the proposal the best way to solve the Vietnam war. Did he understand correctly that I required that there be no violent upheaval during the period of withdrawal? I said this was correct. He asked how long a time I had set--in my own mind--for

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withdrawal. I replied three-five years, although this was obviously subject to negotiation. I added that as long as American soldiers continued to be killed in Vietnam with Soviet weapons it was difficult to speak of a real relaxation of tensions.

Sedov said that the Soviet Union was very interested that the inaugural speech contain some reference to open channels of communication to Moscow. I said that all this would be easier if Moscow showed some cooperativeness on Vietnam. Sedov replied that he would try to have an answer by January 10.

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SECRET/NODISNotes on Conversation with Boris Sedov, January 2, 1969

Tcherniakov (of the Soviet Embassy) delivered the memo on the Middle East to Ellsworth because of its official nature and my absence.

The following is the verbatim text of Sedov's statement to me:

1. Moscow has carefully watched the election campaign which, though a US internal affair, has world-wide significance.
2. Moscow does not have the pessimistic view expressed in many parts of the world in connection with the accession of the Republicans to power.
3. It is not true that Moscow makes its attitude dependent on which party is allegedly more to the right.
4. The key concern of Moscow is whether statements of great powers are animated by a sense of reality.
5. Moscow noted with satisfaction Mr. Nixon's cable to President Podgornyy to the effect that the American and Soviet people work together in a spirit of mutual respect and on the basis of special responsibility for the peace of the world. This wish is considered an encouraging sign of the interest of the American side to proceed further in the solution of those problems outlined in bilateral contacts.
6. On the other hand, Moscow is very worried by statements that there is a desire on the part of the US to operate from a "situation of strength." If this theory dominates, and if a new round of armaments starts, the USSR is capable and willing to match the US effort. The world will be reduced to the worst days of the cold war.
7. Moscow realizes that there are theoretical and practical differences between our two countries. These should not interfere with gradual achievement of agreements on a number of problems. That of disarmament is in the first place.

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8. To achieve this goal, it is necessary to develop mutual trust. On the part of Moscow, it is willing to make important steps in this direction, but it wishes that the new Administration act in the same spirit.

9. The Soviet leadership will do their utmost to find ways of solving at least some important problems of disarmament, and to ensure ratification by states of the non-proliferation treaty.

10. The US and USSR must find a way to disarmament, or the consequences will be extremely dangerous for in this connection one always has to keep in mind that disarmament is specifically a Soviet-US problem.

11. The Soviet leadership is determined to continue a policy of peaceful coexistence.

12. Mr. Nixon's statement of November 11 to continue keeping open channels to the USSR did not pass unnoticed in Moscow. Great attention was paid to the part where Mr. Nixon, speaking of President Johnson's foreign policy, confirms his desire to keep open channels of communication to Moscow.

13. It goes without saying that the future of Soviet-American relations would be favorably affected by settlement of the Vietnam problem, a political solution of the situation in the Middle East, a realistic approach to the situation in Europe as a whole, and the German problem in particular. (Oral comment: The Soviet Union has special interests in Eastern Europe.)

14. Moscow hopes that even before the inauguration Nixon indicates interest in betterment of relations with the Soviet Union. (inaugural address)

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