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MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

Subject: Haig-Gromyko Conversation

Date: January 26, 1982

Time: 2:00 to 7:00 P.M.

Place: Soviet Mission, Geneva

Participants: US

Secretary of State  
Alexander M. Haig  
D. Arensburger,  
Interpreter

USSR

Foreign Minister  
Andrey A. Gromyko  
V. Sukhodrev  
Interpreter

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INF and SALT

Foreign Minister Gromyko did not know whether Secretary Haig had anything to add on the question of medium-range nuclear systems in Europe. If the Secretary had nothing to add, then there was nothing further that Gromyko could say on that subject. Accordingly, he proposed to move on. Though Gromyko did not know the Secretary's possibilities, he, Gromyko, wanted to address briefly the matter of strategic arms and to listen to the Secretary's views on that subject. Lately there had been speculations galore in the press, including speculations to the effect that the Secretary did not want to discuss this issue at the current meeting. There were even press suggestions that the Secretary's intention was to displease the Soviet Union. Gromyko wanted to think that the situation was different, that such reports were incorrect and that they misinterpreted the views of the Secretary and the US Administration. This was a serious issue. The Soviet Union thought that now that discussions were underway on medium-range nuclear arms, the two states should deal with this question as well. After all, time was marching on and by force of circumstances it would be necessary to deal with the subject. But the more time elapsed, the more difficult it would become to deal with the subject, and the more difficult it would be to find appropriate solutions. Gromyko wanted to believe that the Secretary was prepared to exchange views on this matter, at least briefly. If so, Gromyko, too, was prepared to address it.

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The Secretary replied that in the spirit of the principle of equal security he wanted to comment very briefly on some observations made this morning by Gromyko on the INF topic. Gromyko had really touched on three areas, and during lunch the Secretary had an opportunity to consider Gromyko's comments regarding the written proposal he had read. The Secretary considered it important to reiterate again the basic observation he had made regarding the Geneva discussions thus far. What was involved was a basic difference in approach in assessing data, threats and arms, both quantitatively and qualitatively. Gromyko had made the point very vigorously that the arms in Western Europe were strategic for the Soviet Union. That, of course, was also true with respect to our Western European allies, especially in the case of the SS-20. Furthermore, Gromyko had raised the question of global versus regional. The Secretary wanted to assure Gromyko that our problem involved mobile application of these systems, especially medium-range missiles, the capability of shifting and moving them.

It was necessary to deal with this matter at the ongoing negotiations in such a way that all sides would be confident that the picture was balanced. Certain statements had been made in Geneva to the effect that aircraft carriers and aircraft on them, the A-6s and the A-7s, which were never deployed here, even FB-111s which were in the United States, were included in Soviet force balances. Accordingly, it was a very difficult problem to be sure that we viewed the threats to each country in a common perspective.

The US saw a number of flaws in the Soviet presentation of the balance of capability. The Soviet position presented thus far in Geneva obscured the fact that the Soviet side had a greater number of nuclear systems, including land-based missiles which have great precision and involve greater accuracy, and also have numerous delivery capabilities. The Soviet position presented in Geneva ignored warheads and focused only on launchers, although a more significant measure of capability involves the question of warheads. The Soviet side insisted on including the arms of the United Kingdom and France, in the balance, overlooking the fact that these were strategic systems of sovereign states outside US control.

Gromyko had focused earlier on FB-111s, A-6s and A-7s, but the Soviet side wanted to exclude several Soviet aircraft with ranges comparable to those of US systems which allegedly constituted a threat to the Soviet Union. It was necessary to have a balance in the figures and to resolve the differences in that regard. Until that occurred, it would be very difficult

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to make meaningful proposals on reductions. For example, the Secretary did not know how to tabulate the balances, even including allied systems. The Soviet inventory was overwhelmingly superior. The 580 SS-20s, SS-5s and SS-4s were associated with over 1,140 warheads, and using the approach the Soviet side had applied with regard to US nuclear-capable aircraft, the Soviet inventory involved 8,500 systems. On the other hand, F-111s, F-16s and F-4s added up to only 1,800. While the Secretary did not want to take the time now to discuss these numbers, because this should be left to experts, he had listed them in order to point out that this is where the problem started. He thought that, generally speaking, we should work toward resolving these approaches.

The Secretary said that the second area he wished to raise involved Gromyko's rationale regarding Soviet deployment of SS-20s. The Secretary knew the facts because he had much experience with NATO and with military forces, and had witnessed the evolution of the threat to NATO Europe. He also knew very clearly the situation regarding development and deployment of SS-20s, because at that time -- that is, in the late '60s and early '70s -- he had been Dr. Kissinger's Deputy in Washington. In this connection, it was necessary to take into account other dramatic changes in the Soviet posture, such as an increase in troop strength by one-third, a thickening of the combat echelons, a buildup in tank divisions and in mobile divisions, along with greater fire power. There had also been the most dramatic buildup in aircraft of modern times. The entire character of the Soviet Air Force had changed with respect to Western Europe during the period 1970 to 1978/79. It had gone from air defensive capabilities to long-range, dual-capable offensive capabilities. Manpower advantages had gone to a two-to-one ratio, the advantage in tanks to a three-to-one ratio. In the course of this, the number of nuclear warheads had increased six-to-one. All that had occurred simultaneously with the deployment of the SS-20s.

No objective observer could attribute SS-20 deployment to a reaction to Western modernization at a time when more than 1,000 warheads were withdrawn on our side. The Secretary was familiar with that withdrawal because he had fought that decision, but it was nevertheless carried out. It was important to get a clear picture on where we were with respect to SS-20s and how we got there, because only from that standpoint would it be possible to establish some basis for reductions which were in order. The Secretary had presented the above to be sure the record was clear in light of what Gromyko had said this morning, and so that the Soviet side would understand our concern.

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The Secretary continued that, with respect to the question raised by Gromyko about SALT/START, we, too, had read all about that. It was true that we were not prepared, as we might have been in the absence of events, to move forward to discussing this subject now. Gromyko would know that we had worked intensively, as the Secretary had noted in September, to prepare our position. He hoped that we could initiate START negotiations at the earliest possible time. Those preparations were continuing, but at this time the Secretary was not prepared to engage in a substantive or procedural discussion, such as on the time of resuming these negotiations, and would not be prepared until the climate was right. When the climate was right, he knew that the President would make this very evident through diplomatic channels. The Secretary hoped that this would occur in the not too distant future.

Gromyko would know that, as the President said in November, the latter was anxious to resume the dialogue on this subject and was seeking substantial reductions in strategic arms. He thought that it was evident from the current INF discussions that there was a strong and clear interrelationship between the two topics, and that progress would be produced simultaneously with regard to INF, as well as strategic systems. The Secretary wanted to underline the relationship between the two. Therefore, we would always approach INF from the standpoint of negotiations on strategic systems, even though there would be different venues and different delegations. The Secretary had wanted to make this observation, as Gromyko had done with regard to the areas he wanted to discuss, because in his view it had been important for him to respond so that there be no question about the area of strategic arms. We were here to listen to each other, not to raise fences to communications on questions of major significance to our overall relationship.

Gromyko replied that he had little to add to what he had said this morning with regard to medium-range nuclear arms in Europe. He wanted to emphasize that, of course, he could not accept the statement that the SS-20 deployment was not caused by corresponding actions by the NATO bloc. It was precisely NATO activities--and NATO was constantly modernizing its corresponding nuclear arms--which had forced the Soviet Union to deploy the SS-20s, even though this had not resolved the problem by a long shot, that is, the problem caused by NATO in upsetting the balance of nuclear arms in Europe. Failure by the Secretary to recognize that the factors with respect to the Soviet Union were justified showed that the US position was not objective, and the Soviet Union could not accept the Secretary's views of the US position or the Soviet position.

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In trying to reverse the ratio between US and Soviet arms in Europe, the Secretary was ignoring one simple fact, namely that with respect to nuclear-capable aircraft, for example, the count proposed by NATO and US representatives involved understating the combat radius of US aircraft and artificially exaggerating the combat radius of Soviet aircraft. The Soviet Delegation had partly noted this already; it had cited specific types of aircraft, that is, aircraft with a range of "X". The US side on the other hand, without offering any proof had contested this data, claiming that the range was "X plus Y". The US side pretended that it knew more about Soviet systems than the Soviet side, and was engaging in this practice in order to fit the figures to its preconceived notion. The Soviet side had encountered this more than once, and the Soviet Union could not accept that kind of approach. The US side's failure to accept Soviet data involved certain preconceived notions. This was being done artificially, intentionally. Gromyko did not want to attribute these actions to the Secretary personally, he did not know who was responsible, but he was asking the Secretary to sort out the figures objectively and if the Secretary did this he would see an entirely different picture. The force relationship cited by US representatives was incorrect, it was a total invention.

Of course, the Secretary could respond, "no, we are correct." If the Secretary were to say that, Gromyko could not but express his regrets that the US position involved such an absence of seriousness. The question arises, what individuals, what organizations supply such data which are at odds with reality. For example, some Soviet aircraft which played no significant role in Europe and posed no threat in the European arena were claimed to be strategic. In this connection, Gromyko wanted to cite the example of Cuba where the US side was making absurd assertions about certain aircraft being nuclear-delivery vehicles, though in fact these aircraft are of no significance to the region involved. Nevertheless, the US was perceiving them as a threat. Gromyko had mentioned Cuba because the analogy could not be escaped. He did not wish to call this matter by its proper name, it was best to refrain from such words. There had been at least a minimum amount of objectivity during preparation of the SALT I and SALT II Agreements, and as a result we had moved forward. If that principle were not adhered to now, if it were crossed out, it would be very difficult to make any progress.

Gromyko, turning to strategic arms, said that he was very sorry to hear the Secretary say that he was unable at this time to talk about resumption of the strategic arms negotiations, to hear him say that this entire topic had to await a better

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sit down at a table and work out and sign an agreement on banning these weapons. It was the US position which was responsible for failure to complete this work. Gromyko was asking the Secretary to tell the President and the entire Cabinet that the Soviet Union did not use chemical or toxic weapons anywhere and did not intend to use them. The Soviet Union had no such intent and was opposed to any country having chemical or toxic weapons in their arsenals. The Soviet Union was for banning these weapons, for negotiating, concluding and signing an agreement to that effect. That was the Soviet position.

The Secretary said he wished to give Gromyko a prepared fact sheet on this subject. Surely Gromyko would understand that the Secretary would never make a public statement, as he had, if there had not been overwhelming evidence concerning the facts of the use of such weapons. We had films, first-hand reports, blood tests and chemical samples, and not just from government sources, but also from independent sources. It was perhaps conceivable that the regimes with which the USSR associated might have somehow developed this capability, but there was a very clear tie to Soviet advisors and Soviet military personnel. The Secretary wanted to hand over the fact sheet in order that Gromyko understand that we had facts and evidence.

Gromyko replied that as a sign of his indignation regarding this falsified information, he did not wish to take this document. He inquired whether this document had been released. The Secretary said that the fact sheet had been prepared for Gromyko and no one else. The Secretary went on to say that he wanted to reiterate that the information presented to him and to the President was absolutely multi-sourced, that it included films, laboratory tests and independent opinions, not just the opinions of government agencies. Clearly, there was a problem -- a problem that would not go away.

Poland

Gromyko now wanted to turn to the matter of Poland. He had no intention of discussing the internal affairs of the Polish people with anyone. Other Soviet officials also had no such intention. However, he did want to say that the Soviet Union was resolutely opposed to interference in Poland and objected to the insinuations emanating from Washington and some other NATO capitals. What has not been attributed to the Soviet Union? Allegations were being made

that Soviet troops were massing on the Polish border, that they were about to intervene, that the Soviet Union was already intervening. From time to time the Soviet Union denied these allegations, yet new versions of an alleged Soviet interference in the internal affairs of Poland surfaced again and again. The fact was that the Soviet Union had no intention of interfering in the internal affairs of Poland. Incidentally, the decree on the imposition of martial law was strictly constitutional, and both the Soviet Union and Poland had been saying that this was a national decision.

Had the Soviet Union been involved when Poland took the step, it would be impossible to conceal that from history. The Soviet Union as well as Poland had assured the US that the USSR was not involved in that decision. The question arose why was an effort made to accuse the Soviet Union? In the Soviet opinion -- and the Secretary would probably not agree -- the explanation was that Washington needed to accuse the Soviet Union in order to cover up longstanding US interference. The US was not alone, but the US was playing the first fiddle. Evidently, the US believed that an accusation against the Soviet Union would act as a shock absorber. Gromyko recognized that some Americans fell for this line, but that was because most Americans read only US statements in US propaganda publications. The US was simply disregarding Soviet statements by failing to publish them. Gromyko said that this was not merely a reproach, but an accusation against the US Government. Gromyko did not need to apologize on behalf of the Soviet Union, because the latter was not interfering in the internal affairs of Poland. No one had the right to such interference, which was of a political and economic nature.

The new dance -- sanctions -- is again appearing. In Europe there were provocative radio stations which Gromyko occasionally had to listen to in the line of his duties, though he could not tolerate such broadcasts for very long. These stations were giving the Poles lessons on how to arrange their affairs. Thus, they were saying that the Poles should turn over one-third of the power to the Church, and another third to Solidarity, or rather the reactionary wing of Solidarity; better yet, they should turn over all power to the latter. Why should Washington be engaged in handing out power, why should it be saying who should receive power and who should lose it?

Did the U.S. expect the Soviet Union to interfere in a backward way to turn power over to the Church and

Solidarity? That was absolute fantasy. The Poles should be permitted to live and make their own decisions. Of course, like decent people, the Soviet Union wanted to help. If the US wanted to render honest assistance it, too, could do so. The Soviet Union was providing much assistance; The US could do the same, but it acted otherwise, it chose to exacerbate the situation. Gromyko did not want to discuss Polish affairs, and he would not have addressed the matter if the Secretary had not touched on it. Though, come to think of it, perhaps he would in any case have said, "stop interfering in Polish affairs."

The Secretary responded that he saw no useful purpose in debating the issues Gromyko had raised. It would serve a useful purpose if both of us recognized that the Polish situation had now become extremely dangerous for the world at large and for our future relationship. As categorically as Gromyko insisted that the Soviet Union was not involved, the Secretary also would insist that there was no US interference in Poland and that there could be no such interference.

The Secretary did know, however, that our own estimate of the situation was fairly accurate and he thought that it did not depart much from the Soviet estimate, namely that the situation in Poland was deteriorating. This should concern everyone. It was not a matter of meddling in the affairs of the Polish people, it was a matter of a threat to international peace. We had made very clear that we wanted to help. Last year we had provided more than one billion dollars by way of credits and food. The same was true of other Western European countries. Today Poland is drifting either toward total anarchy or toward violence.

We were convinced that the ultimate outcome must be a compromise. Something had to be said publicly on this score because this matter involved all the signatories of the Helsinki Accords which, in their essence, sanctified territorial integrity and noninterference, but also contained fundamental obligations with respect to human rights. The Secretary thought that Gromyko would understand why the strongest forces in the US and in Western Europe with respect to the Polish situation involved unions and working people. The Secretary had looked for some hopeful sign in Gromyko's comments. Frankly, he had found only propaganda. He was not saying this to add still more propaganda to the discussion, but because this problem was pivotal for the world at large and for the US-Soviet relationship in particular.



We were not here to pressure or to preach, but we could suggest that there ought to be some formula that would be perceived by the world at large as suggesting a moderating approach in all of the following three areas: the release of prisoners, the lifting of martial law and the institution of a dialogue. The above suggestions came from Western Europe, and the US agreed with them. He would refer Gromyko to the statements made in a number of capitals -- including Bonn -- which mentioned these three conditions. It was the Secretary's great concern, and it should be Gromyko's concern too, that if this situation was permitted to drift, it would lead to deterioration in terms of the economy and in terms of law and order, and would heighten the strains. He thought that everyone understood the paramount need for safety valves to relieve the pressures generated by the situation in Poland.

Our standpoint was that the situation was extremely unsatisfactory, very dangerous, and concerned the entire world, not only Europe or the US, and could lead to a very dire outcome. The Secretary believed that it was in the interest of each of us to seek remedies which would bring Poland back on the road of economic and social recovery. The Secretary had listened carefully to Gromyko's statement that this is what mattered for the Soviet Union. But history belied that. Previously in history the Soviet Union at times had acted in ways which we very much opposed. The Secretary thought that credible, demonstrable moderation was in everyone's interest; he did not believe this would entail risks that were unacceptable to the Soviet Union.

Gromyko responded that the Secretary's information was totally incorrect. The situation was improving and improving quite successfully. No one should hamper this process and the Secretary's gloomy information was inaccurate.