

DEPARTMENT OF STATE

Memorandum of Conversation

DATE: 21 February 1978

SUBJECT: Horn, Arms Control, Middle East, Misc.

PARTICIPANTS: US: The Secretary, Marshall D. Shulman, S/MS; USSR: Amb. Anatoly F. Dobrynin

DISTRIBUTION:

Ambassador Dobrynin came in at our request. We discussed the following matters:

1. Horn. The Secretary reviewed the results of Aaron's meetings with Mengistu. He indicated that Mengistu had repeated his assurance that Ethiopia had no territorial ambitions beyond its own border, but was determined to have the Somalis withdrawn from the Ogaden. Mengistu also indicated that any initiative at the present time would have to come through the OAU, and that emissaries had been sent to see Garba in Lagos. The Secretary reported that Mengistu had agreed to receive an Ambassador from the U.S. The supply of non-lethal equipment was also discussed. On the whole, the conversations had been successful in keeping the channels of communication open.

The Secretary reported that the Somalis had been urged to withdraw from the Ogaden. He expressed his concern that the conflict could go on, and could spill across the border, creating great complications. The Secretary urged that the Soviet Union join with us in putting maximum efforts behind the OAU initiative for a ceasefire and mediation.

Dobrynin replied that the Soviet Union is prepared to do this, particularly because it believes that nothing useful can be achieved at the UN Security Council at the present juncture. He said that the Soviet Union had learned two days ago from the Nigerian Foreign Minister that he believed it possible to accomplish something useful, and that his complaints at this point were directed more against the Somalis than against the Ethiopians.

S/MS: MDSHULMAN (Officer)
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Dobrynin referred to a previous inquiry about a report that the Ethiopians might be contemplating an effort to take the town of Hargeisa as a hostage against Somali evacuation of the Ogaden. He said he was personally skeptical about the report, but that he had forwarded the inquiry to Moscow, without any response so far.

The Secretary observed that he had, in testimony that morning, asserted his belief that the Soviet Union had no aspirations against Somalia. Dobrynin replied that this was a safe statement.

2. ASAT. The Secretary mentioned that he would be presenting a paper to the Soviet Union, probably sometime next week, with specific suggestions for a meeting on this subject.
3. Israeli Nuclear Weapons. Dobrynin gave the Secretary a non-paper asking for clarifications of CIA press reports that Israel possessed nuclear weapons, and urging US influence to gain Israeli accession to the non-proliferation treaty. The Secretary said that the Israelis had denied the possession of nuclear weapons; that the CIA had indicated that Israel had the capability of producing them, but was divided on the question of whether it had already done so. He said that he would study the paper and reply.
4. UN Charter Revision. Dobrynin also gave the Secretary a paper, in Russian, agreeing with the US position on not undertaking a revision of the UN Charter at the present time. (A similar paper is apparently being presented to other capitals.)
5. Indian Ocean. Dobrynin said conversationally that Mendeleovich was disappointed at the small progress achieved in the Indian Ocean negotiations, and the unwillingness of Warnke even to set a date for the next meeting.
6. Gromyko's Health. In answer to a question, Dobrynin said that Gromyko had been operated on for prostate two days before, and that it would be several days before it was known how serious the effects would be.
7. Asad in Moscow. The Secretary inquired about the conversations with Asad in Moscow. Dobrynin said he had not yet received information, but would report on the conversations later.
8. Congressional Committee Visit to Moscow. Dobrynin mentioned that his military attache, at a Pentagon lunch, was told that the House Armed Services Committee had expressed an interest in visiting Moscow, and asked for guidance. The Secretary expressed the view that it might be useful to have some selected members of that Committee make such a visit.

9. Soviet SALT Compliance. In a separate conversation, Shulman told Dobrynin that a report was being prepared for presentation to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee in a few days that would answer charges of Soviet non-compliance with the SALT I agreement. Shulman explained that the US was sensitive to the confidentiality of SCC proceedings, in which these issues were resolved, and while the paper would draw upon the SCC proceedings, it would avoid unnecessary detail about them. Dobrynin said this sounded fine to him, and that he would inform Moscow, but he anticipated no objections. Shulman said that he would send Dobrynin a copy of the paper when it was ready for presentation to the Congress.

The US press has been increasingly publishing of late materials, in which conclusions are made regarding the possession by Israel of nuclear weapons. A recent publication of the information to that effect with reference to a report by one of the US governmental agencies presents a new element in this connection.

Reports of such kind, obviously, cannot but cause deep concern in the Soviet Union.

As is known, we have already more than once drawn attention of the US to the necessity of exerting influence on Israel with a view of its accession to the Treaty on non-proliferation of nuclear weapons. However, Israel has been obstinately refusing so far to become a party to the Treaty and, while its nuclear activities remain outside any international control, continues to increase in every possible way its nuclear potential. It is not a secret that such types of aircraft and missiles are also made available to Israel which can be used as nuclear weapons delivery vehicles. It is not difficult to imagine the consequences - both for the situation in the Middle East and for the international situation in general - which could be brought about by the possession of nuclear weapons by Israel.

Therefore, proceeding from the determination jointly expressed by our countries to make efforts to prevent the spread of nuclear weapons, we would like to receive clarifications, to what extent are true the reports that the US governmental agencies, as far back as in 1974, came to the conclusion that Israel is in possession of nuclear weapons.

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