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UNITED STATES ARMS CONTROL AND DISARMAMENT AGENCY

Memorandum of Conversation

DATE: January 3, 1968

SUBJECT: Soviet Views on NPT (U)

PARTICIPANTS: Mr. Yuly M. Vorontsov, Counselor, Soviet Embassy
Mr. Samuel DePalma, Assistant Director, ACDA/IR

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Vorontsov invited me to lunch to discuss the current situation on the NPT. He said he could not predict what the Soviet reaction would be to our November 2 formulation for Article III. He expressed concern that the reaction might be a "tough" one because he knew that there were people in Moscow who were disturbed by the "take it or leave it" nature of our Article III position. When I protested that there was no basis for such an attitude, he said that he and the Soviet Delegation in Geneva had tried to make this clear to Moscow but there were "high officials" in Moscow who felt that our November 2 proposal was a "pressure play to squeeze the last ounce out of the Soviet Union".

I again explained that our November 2 proposal represented the only formulation we felt we could persuade our allies to accept, having tried and failed to gain acceptance of various other formulations. I stressed that what we had in mind were safeguards agreements (a) permitting the IAEA to satisfy itself that no diversion was taking place and (b) of such a nature as to give equal confidence to all concerned.

Vorontsov then said that the safeguards issue will now have to be considered by the Politburo and that this posed additional problems.

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I expressed surprise that a matter of this kind needed the consideration and approval of the Politburo, but he maintained that this was the case and went on to stress that it was exceedingly difficult to deal with an essentially technical question in a forum which is largely concerned with political matters.

When I pressed him for at least a personal guess as to the kind of reply we might expect from Moscow, he said that it was possible his people might want to try to put some "balance" into our formulation by injecting the idea that safeguards would have to apply equally to all non-nuclear parties. I said that this idea, which seemed plausible on its face, could cause difficulties, particularly if they were to suggest some rather crude formulation. He said he understood our problem but that we must also understand their political problem vis-a-vis their allies. He then suggested that the US ought also to be thinking of a more general approach to Article III in case it proved impossible to reach agreement on the basis of the approach we have been considering over the past months. He was extremely vague as to what this more general approach would be and all I could get out of him, after repeated questioning, was the thought that there might be a brief article calling for mandatory safeguards to be worked out and implemented after the NPT comes into force. I said I wondered whether it was possible at this late date to revert to such an idea and asked whether it represented some official thinking in Moscow or only his own personal view. He stressed that it was his personal view and that he had no idea what we were likely to get from Moscow.

We then reviewed very briefly the other outstanding issues concerning the treaty. When I said that we were now convinced that it would be necessary to incorporate a reasonable provision on limited duration, he asked whether we would stand fast on at least 25 years. I said that I thought we would if they would agree to a reasonable formulation. His reply was "I don't see why it won't be possible".

He foresaw no difficulty in Moscow's agreeing to modify the amendments clause to make clear that amendments are binding only on those accepting them. He was vague on periodic review conferences, but gave me the impression that perhaps something

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might be worked out. He admitted, however, that he had no idea what Moscow's current thinking was on this question.

I stressed the importance of an early Soviet reaction on Article III, pointing out that it would not be possible to keep the conference going very long in Geneva with Article III still in dispute. He said he fully agreed and hoped that we would have a response soon. He added, however, that he was inclined to think the response was not likely to come much before the 18th but that he hoped that it would be provided toward the end of next week. He said that if the response were forthcoming before the opening of the conference it would probably be made available through their Embassy in Washington.

We then had a brief and very general discussion concerning the importance of getting a dialogue going on limitations on strategic nuclear weapons. I said it was a pity that they had not found it possible to publish McNamara's speech announcing the decision to deploy a limited ABM because I felt there was much in it which was useful for the Soviet people to know. He agreed the speech was excellent and said that it had aroused much attention in official circles, but said that the question was a very difficult one and much as he hoped that some discussion could get underway soon, he had no basis for assuming that this would be the case. He concluded by sharing my hope that the signing of an acceptable non-proliferation treaty would generate a political atmosphere which would make it possible to initiate discussion of the strategic weapons problem. In this connection he also spoke of the difficulty of initiating a discussion without publicity and wondered whether it would be at all possible to do so. I said that it was difficult to keep a matter of this kind secret for long, but if the Soviets were serious about wanting the talks, it would surely be possible for both of us to keep them quiet, at least for the opening phase.

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