

DEPUTY UNDER SECRETARY OF STATE
WASHINGTON

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March 1, 1967

Dear Walt:

The British have given us access to a detailed account of the discussions which Prime Minister Wilson and Foreign Secretary Brown had with Premier Kosygin in London on ABM. Since I felt this provided the best and deepest insight we have had into how Soviet leadership looks at the ABM issue, I thought you would find it of interest.

Please note that the British have asked us to give this information very restricted handling.

Sincerely,

Foy
Foy D. Kohler

Mr. Walt W. Rostow
Special Assistant to the President
The White House

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DEPARTMENT OF STATE

Memorandum of Conversation

DATE: February 27, 1967

SUBJECT: British Discussions with the Soviets on ABMs

PARTICIPANTS: Ian Smart, First Secretary, British Embassy
Seymour Weiss, G/PM

COPIES TO: G - Mr. Kohler

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1. Mr. Ian Smart, First Secretary, British Embassy, asked to see me today. He noted that, as I was aware, Michael Stewart had recently briefed Mr. Kohler in a general way on the discussions which the British Prime Minister and Foreign Secretary had with Premier Kosygin. Mr. Kohler had expressed interest in obtaining additional details. Smart handed me a record of the discussion in London, but said that he was not authorized to leave it with me. He said he would, however, be willing to have me make whatever notes I wished. Michael Stewart had explicitly asked that this be called to Mr. Kohler's attention with the note that he hoped we would give the information a very restricted handling. I assured him this would be conveyed to Mr. Kohler. My notes, taken from the record of the conversation which Smart made available, are reproduced in the following paragraphs.

2. "Conversation Between Prime Minister Wilson, Foreign Secretary Brown and Premier Kosygin on the subject of Anti-Ballistic Missile Systems, London, February, 1967."

3. The Foreign Secretary raised the separate question of the major development and deployment of ABM systems. He said that such a development and deployment would give cause for concern. It would interfere

with progress on a comprehensive test ban, toward reduced stock-piles and even toward progress on general non-proliferation. He pointed out that the Prime Minister had talked to Mr. Kosygin and to the President. He wished to ask the Soviet Union to give serious consideration to a mutual understanding to halt development of these systems "before things went too far."

4. Mr. Kosygin said that the Soviet Union had not taken any final decision so he could not give a considered answer at the moment. He thought, however, that the UK had posed the question "in a very odd way." The attitude of President Johnson and Mr. McNamara seemed to be to ask why they should start making anti-missile systems when it was cheaper to make offensive weapons. He was surprised that the UK should support this attitude. "It was obscurantism and misanthropy." Any child knew that it was easier to buy offensive rather than defensive weapons. "What kind of philosophy was it that concerned itself with killing people in the cheapest possible way?"

5. The Foreign Secretary said he was not trying to encourage cheaper systems. In fact, he was afraid if we went into this field it would stimulate those people whose only answer was more offensive systems. He wanted to achieve a cut-off; to get to general disarmament.

6. "Mr. Kosygin said he fully understood the view that if one side produced defensive systems it stimulated the other to increase and develop new offensive ones. Moreover, it was costly. But if all countries could perfect defensive anti-missile systems mankind could live in peace because nuclear war would have been neutralized. The philosophy behind the UK question astounded him"

7. "Mr. Kosygin said what President Johnson and Mr. McNamara were saying was: Let's not have ABMs, let's develop offensive weapons because they are cheaper. What the Soviet Union would like would be a lucid program for the renunciation of all nuclear weapons. If we did not do this today it would be more difficult and more costly tomorrow. The Chinese had tightened their belts, stopped their housing program and lowered their already small wages in an effort to obtain an offensive nuclear weapons system. He inquired whether this suited the UK. It certainly did not suit the Soviet Union. There was a stand to be taken on nuclear disarmament. If 50, or 100 countries were in favor of destroying all nuclear weapons they could coerce the rest. When would that be possible, 100 years from

now, 50 years, 60 years hence, or when the first nuclear war broke out? Was that what the UK wanted? The Soviet Union wanted to forestall this crisis. Mr. Kosygin said he fully understood the technicalities and the cost involved in ABM systems. He was not arguing with the British, he was expressing his own views on a question of great importance."

8. The Prime Minister said the case of China highlighted the need for the non-proliferation treaty. In other areas, India and Pakistan, for example, proliferation would divert money and resources from food to nuclear status seeking. The Foreign Secretary had not been emphasizing cost; he was simply saying that if you develop defensive weapons there is a further development of offensive weapons. This would give a further dangerous twist to the arms spiral. A stop had to be put to the process.

9. "Mr. Kosygin said if we assured that all plans for ABM defense were scrapped -- and the US was doing less work in this field than the Soviet Union -- then the money would be available for offensive weapons. The Prime Minister said not in this country. Mr. Kosygin asked which was more conducive to peace, a country which based itself on offensive or defensive systems? The answer was that a country which gave itself ABM systems, but did not develop its offensive weapons was concerning itself with defense. The UK was not developing ABM systems, were they trying to save the Americans money?" The Foreign Secretary said that we wanted to stop the arms race.

10. "Mr. Kosygin said if we [i.e., the UK] agreed to complete nuclear disarmament we ought to say so in public." "The Foreign Secretary said he trusted we were both in favor of total disarmament. Mr. Kosygin said that, in short, if ABM development was curtailed the funds saved would go into offensive systems." This was simply the general logic of the situation. Mr. Kosygin felt that the UK position was weak -- that it simply amounted to support of the Americans. "He did not want to develop ABM systems; they were very costly. But the position was very complex." The US had raised the question and now so had the UK "but without taking into account a whole series of circumstances."