

22. Memorandum of Conversation (USSR)¹

Washington, May 14, 1969.

At Kissinger's invitation, I visited him in his office at the White House on the morning of May 14.

Kissinger said that, as I was aware, President Nixon was to deliver a televised address to the nation on Vietnam at 10 p.m. tonight. Nixon had expressed the wish that the text of his speech be provided to the Soviet Ambassador in advance so that it could then be transmitted to Moscow for the Soviet Government.

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To a question as to what he, Kissinger, sees as the difference between the position of the current administration and the position of the Johnson Administration on the Vietnam issue, he asserted that there is indeed a definite difference.

He stated that prior to March–April 1968 Johnson had, in general, believed only in a military solution; therefore, he had made virtually no effort to think about the substance of the political problems. However, after he stopped the bombing of the DRV, he had rather naively hoped for a fairly quick settlement—as the other side's response. In the face of unyielding tactics by the Vietnamese at the negotiations, he was somewhat at a loss, and until the end of his presidency he essentially had no clear political views as to what more to do and how to deal with the other side.

Nixon, on the other hand, takes a realistic approach, according to Kissinger. He recognizes *de facto* Hanoi's interest in the further development of events in South Vietnam. He recognizes the NLF as a reality that exists and operates in South Vietnam. He is prepared to accept South Vietnam's neutrality. He is prepared to accept whatever the South Vietnamese themselves agree on. In the final analysis, he is even prepared to accept any political system in South Vietnam, "provided there is a fairly reasonable interval between conclusion of an agreement and [the establishment of] such a system."

At this point my conversation with Kissinger was interrupted, since we were invited to join Nixon upstairs.

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A. Dobrynin

¹ Source: AVP RF, f. 0129, op. 53, p. 399, d. 6, l. 44–50. Secret. From Dobrynin's Journal. No American record of Dobrynin's conversation with either Kissinger or Nixon has been found.