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MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

September 23, 1966

SUBJECT: Conversation with Soviet participants at Pugwash
conference on the subject of Vietnam

FROM: Henry A. Kissinger

DECLASSIFIED
E.O. 13292, Sec. 3.4
By ebm, NARA, Date 10-27-03

(1) On September 11th, while taking a boat trip through Gdansk harbor I sat next to Academician Emilyanov. I said that it seemed to me the only beneficiary of Soviet-U.S. tensions over Vietnam could be Communist China. Emilyanov agreed emphatically. He said that China was no longer Communist but Fascist. The Red Guards reminded him of nothing so much as the Hitler Youth. The U.S. and U.S.S.R. had a common interest in preventing Chinese expansion. I said that if this was true, I did not understand Soviet reluctance to help end the war in Vietnam. Emilyanov said that we had to be patient. He had not seen the Soviet government so confused since the aftermath of Khrushchev's de-Stalinization speech. Some Stalinists saw in the Vietnamese war a chance to make a comeback; others just did not know what to do.

(Note: Emilyanov did not show this moderation at the open sessions of the conference. There he was an emotional, virulent critic of U.S. policy.)

(2) On September 12th Frank Long arranged a private meeting with a few members of the Soviet delegation. Present were Millionshikov, Emilyanov and Khvostov on the Soviet side and Long, Doty and myself. The American side did most of the talking. We made the point that the United States would never withdraw unilaterally, that at the same time the Administration was sincere in seeking an honorable peace, that the Soviets could not be interested in

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vindicating the Chinese conception of international affairs.

The Soviet delegation, while extremely polite and even cordial, was very tough. They repeated the familiar Soviet position that bombing of the North had to be stopped unconditionally and that the United States would have to quit South Vietnam. There were only two possible points of interest. Millionshikov said that he thought Point Three of Hanoi's program was negotiable. Khvostov said that we had to understand the Soviet Union's feeling of frustration about the daily bombing of a fraternal country.

(3) On September 13th, there was a plenary session devoted to Vietnam. The Soviet group attacked the United States intemperately, intransigently and emotionally. The East Europeans were much more restrained with the Poles being closest to the Soviet position. The Czech position--expressed by Academician Sorm--was so briefly stated and so formal as to amount to a dissociation.

(4) On September 14th, Shustov, the Foreign Office man in the Soviet delegation, asked me before dinner what I thought of the previous night's debate. I said that if it reflected the Soviet official position a continuation and perhaps escalation of the war seemed inevitable. He then suggested that we meet again after dinner. We sat together for half an hour and he asked a number of questions about possible ways to end the bombing of the North. Stressing my unofficial status, I pointed out that statements by American leaders suggested that de-escalation and/or an end to infiltration would provide a basis for negotiation.

Shustov said that he thought Hanoi's Four Points were essentially bargaining counters and were negotiable. He also said that we vastly overestimated the degree of Moscow's influence in Hanoi. Moreover, the Chinese situation made moves by Moscow very difficult.

(5) On September 15th, Shustov came to my working group just before a break and said he wanted to speak to me alone. He said that he had two matters to discuss: (a) Millionshikov wanted me to know that what had been said to the Soviet group about Vietnam would be fully reported in Moscow, whatever their actions in open sessions, (b) he wanted to express Soviet eagerness to conclude a non-proliferation treaty during this session of the General Assembly and made a specific proposal which has been reported separately.

(6) On September 16th, I told General Talensky, the member of the Soviet delegation whom I know best--that I had been well impressed by the fact that he had kept aloof from the general vilification and intemperateness on the subject of Vietnam. Talensky replied that it was a terrible situation. The real menace in the world was China. A war between the U.S. and the U.S.S.R. over Vietnam would be an absurdity. The real problem was to keep Southeast Asia out of Chinese hands. The Chinese were Fascists. "If they have two nuclear bombs operational, will they use both against us or one against you?" I asked

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how he explained the Soviet behavior at the conference if this was true. He replied that it takes a long time for realities to sink in. There were still military men who thought war a possibility; Soviet memories of partisan warfare created an automatic sympathy for the Vietcong. Still peace between the U.S. and the U.S.S.R. was essential to prevent domination of the world by China and to permit the U.S.S.R. to continue developing its consumer industry.

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