

UNITED STATES ARMS CONTROL AND DISARMAMENT AGENCY  
WASHINGTON

OFFICE OF  
THE DIRECTOR

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March 10, 1972

MEMORANDUM FOR MR. HENRY KISSINGER  
THE WHITE HOUSE

Subject: Biological Weapons Convention, the  
President's Attendance at Signing  
Ceremony

As I said to you on the phone yesterday, I think it would be important for the President to be present at the signing ceremony, which might be late this month or next month.

I think that his absence would be taken by the Soviets as a sign that the President is for some reason less interested in lending his prestige to this latest instance of US-Soviet agreement than was the case when he attended the signing of the Seabed Treaty. The Soviets will almost certainly wonder whether the China trip is the intervening factor, and once they speculate about this, it is doubtful that any amount of explanation would make them feel certain that it was not.

The question comes in a particularly sharp manner now because the Soviets, through Ambassador Dobrynin, formally suggested on March 3 that the signing should take place with heads of government present. Dobrynin cited the President's presence when the NPT and the Seabed Treaty were signed.

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As you know, the Soviets made the main "concessions" during the negotiations. In effect, they switched from an all-or-nothing C and B ban to adopt the position put forth by the President, as well as the UK, that B weapons should be prohibited first. The Soviets and we, as Co-Chairmen at the Geneva Conference, then worked together effectively to obtain broad support for our approach.

If the Soviets now come to feel that the President was less interested in being associated with such a success, suspecting that the China trip was a factor, the impact on future efforts with the Soviets could not help but be negative.

On the positive side, I think the BW Treaty is a particularly solid arms control achievement. It was overwhelmingly approved at the UN and universally praised in the US press. More than 60 countries, including most of our allies, will probably sign it at the opening.

  
Gerard Smith

P.S. You will recall that the Peoples' Republic has criticized the BW Convention.

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