

December 4, 1973
**Memorandum of Conversation between Nicolae
Ceausescu and President Nixon**

Citation:

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Summary:

Ceasescu, Nixon and Kissinger discuss issues ranging from European security to the
situation in the Middle East.

Original Language:

English

Contents:

Original Scan
Transcript - English

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cc - Gen Scowcroft

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December 4, 1973

MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

PARTICIPANTS:Nicolae Ceausescu, President of Romania
George Macovescu, Foreign Minister
Sergiu Celac, InterpreterPresident Nixon
Henry A. Kissinger, Secretary of State
Harry G. Barnes, Jr., InterpreterDATE AND PLACE:Tuesday, December 4, 1973, 11:05-12:40
The White HousePresident Nixon

(As the Secretary, Foreign Minister Macovescu and Mr. Barnes entered the room), we were just remarking how much the world had changed since 1967 and 1969 when we began dealing with each other -- changed not only insofar as Romanian-American relations are concerned but in general. But our both countries have been adopting a policy aimed at true peace in the world for countries large and small. I was recalling too how President Ceausescu had been of help in a number of questions.

President Ceausescu:

Much has indeed changed, but it is a fact that Romania and the United State have proceeded in the same direction and that you have sustained that policy on the part of the United States. In fact there are new problems now just beginning to appear which impose a different accent upon the world scene. These changes raise certain questions. There are some people who have gotten accustomed to the old ways of doing things. Others are not so successful in understanding the wisdom of change or the deeper sense implicit in change. To be frank, some of these questions are justified. The whole world greeted the visit you paid to China and the normalization of relations with China. Romania was among these. Many others greeted your trip to the Soviet Union, the series of agreements that

REVIEW

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you reached with the Soviets and the subsequent visit of the Secretary-General of the Soviet Communist Party to the United States. Here again Romania was among those who welcomed these developments.

But certainly there are those who put the question whether this new course of development in relations with the USSR and China will not be accomplished at the detriment of others. It's a difficult question to dismiss out of hand. The whole world knows that the United States, China and the USSR are big powers with an important role to play. Therefore reaching agreements among them has a powerful influence on all of international life. Recognizing this I still think that there is justification for the thought that one must not lose sight of the fact that there are a number of other states in various stages of development. These other states must not be ignored, and Romania is one of them.

This new tendency which is now appearing can be consolidated to the extent that account is taken of the need to respect the rights of other states which are affected by the dealings of the great powers. We hope that this cooperation between the United States and the USSR and the United States and China will be extended in this direction so as to make a strong contribution to the development of international life.

These are sentiments which I do not hide from either the Chinese or the Soviets. In fact I make them the subject of all the meetings I have with political leaders and with chiefs of state. These then are some of my more general thoughts.

President Nixon:

We have to recognize that my visit to the People's Republic of China, while generally approved, was not particularly appreciated in some quarters. There were no official pronouncements indicating disapproval but there are some shortsighted leaders - I am not referring to any specific ones - who take the view that all that matters are good

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relations between their own country and the United States even though this is at the expense of bad relations with other countries. The breakthrough with China was significant because it was contrary to that philosophy.

We are also in an interesting predicament in that our meetings with Soviet leaders have not met with universal approval in the non-Socialist countries of Europe. Before I first came to office, and when I was first in office, every European leader said we ought to seek detente with the Soviet Union, that the poor relations between the United States and the Soviet Union were the cause of tensions in Europe. So when the United States does develop different relations with the USSR some European leaders object to what they call detente because this could mean a condominium by the super powers at the expense of others. But they can't have it both ways.

President Ceauescu: To clarify, are you saying that there cannot be detente without condominium?

President Nixon: What it really means is that we can have detente without condominium. That is the best of both worlds. It is a very short-range policy and a nearsighted policy to welcome confrontation between the United States and the USSR. It is important to note in our communique after my visit to China and in the statement issued after Dr. Kissinger's recent visit, as well as in the agreement with the Soviet Union to prevent nuclear war, that we were very careful to include language respecting and protecting the rights of all nations, large and small, from being jeopardized by these agreements. The difficulty, of course, is that everyone is suspicious of everyone else, but I can assure you, Mr. President, that, in my talks I have with other leaders where we discuss Romania or countries like Romania, I stand absolutely firm for your independence and sovereignty

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and firmly against any policy of any nation which might threaten your independence or sovereignty. We recognize your special problems. You have powerful neighbors. I do not suggest they have any designs on your independence. But it is important to bear in mind that so far as the United States is concerned no country, large or small, need have any fear that we will use our power or the diplomacy backed by our power for the purpose of dominating other countries or infringing on their independence. That is the cornerstone of American foreign policy as I have developed it. This applies to the People's Republic of China, to other countries, to Romania, to other nations in Europe and in the Middle East.

You see, the danger that the world could face is that the United States and the Soviet Union, the super powers, with their ability to destroy each other and other powers as well, might because of shortsighted attitudes, make arrangements to have good relations between each other be the dominant consideration, even at the expense of relations with other nations not in the super power class. That is a philosophy we reject. I want to be very candid. I have good relations with Mr. Brezhnev and hope to make them better. Neither he nor I have any illusions as to the fact that our interests collide in various parts of the world, in Europe, so far as the People's Republic of China is concerned, in the Middle East. What we have to do is to see that our collisions don't result in an explosion. Therefore a continuing dialogue is important. So our policy is like the man on the high wire -- we have to be very careful not to let ourselves tilt too far in one direction or the other.

But there is still the fundamental basis of our policy which will never change. We will not make any deals with any major power which would destroy or jeopardize the

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independence or sovereign rights of other countries. That is the basis and cornerstone of American foreign policy. I do not say this just because we are old friends and speak frankly or because the United States is more idealistic than other countries, or simply from the goodness of our hearts, although I would like to believe we have ideals. I say this because in the world in which we live if adventurism by great powers is allowed to have free reign eventually it will lead to a world conflict.

We believe the interests of all nations are served by a policy that keeps peace and, secondly, we believe we must stand firmly against any adventurist-type policy in those places where we have influence which we could bring to bear, lest such a policy of adventurism in today's world could spread.

Because we have gone to China, Russia, Romania, while it does mean that the world is safer, does not mean that there won't continue to be differences where the interests of the major powers happen to differ. I trust that we have established at least the beginning of a structure where such differences can be settled peacefully. We cannot assume simply because we take trips, clink glasses, and shake hands that there are no problems any more. For one can have differences between friends, even in one's family, and obviously there will be differences between nations, whether they be great or small. The United States wants to play a constructive role just as Romania does, and we are anxious that all nations settle their differences in a constructive way.

President Ceausescu:

I have followed what you have had to say, Mr. President, with close attention and with great satisfaction. From the very beginning Romania has spoken out in favor of good relations between the United States and China and between the United States and the Soviet Union. There is no question but we understand the responsibilities which these

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countries as large countries have in international life -- countries with a huge military potential. We also understand the need for action to be taken which would avoid confrontations that would have repercussions for the entire world.

In 1967, I said that it would be a mistake to believe that problems could be solved only by the great powers or that the countries which are now the great powers will always hold that position. The world is changing. Access to modern armaments is something that many countries have now; eventually all will have it. There are countries now which produce nuclear armaments and there are others which are getting ready to do so. Then there are chemical and biological weapons as well. The big powers, of course, have a great deal to say about international problems. They have a powerful influence so far as avoiding dangerous situations is concerned. But where they do not take into account the interests of other countries, it can happen that these countries will take actions which will produce certain risks for international peace, perhaps not as serious as those that might be caused by the great powers, but still serious enough. I believe that it is difficult to presuppose that the United States, the Soviet Union and China alone can play the role of guaranteeing peace or of imposing an understanding on other countries. It is possible at some time that they could make assumptions about the interests of other countries which would not be accepted by those countries, and if they are not, the consequences could be serious.

I had a conversation with a chief of state with whom we have good relations and with whom you have good relations as well, and he told me that he was prepared to do whatever was required to maintain his country's independence, even if it meant turning that country into a desert. There is no question

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that attitudes of countries which think like this will have some influence. I have noted with great satisfaction the statement that you made, Mr. President, that the United States was in favor of a policy which would never affect the sovereignty and independence of other states and I would like to thank you for your statement that in no case would the United States think of putting the independence of Romania in jeopardy.

I had, of course, read your declaration with the Chinese as well as your agreements with the Soviet Union and also the statement issued in connection with Dr. Kissinger's recent visit. As a matter of fact Premier Chou En-lai had drawn my attention to the latter statement and suggested I read with particular care several passages in it.

Secretary Kissinger: Which passages?

President Ceausescu: Among others, the fact that the world is in a state of continuous transformation and the passage with regard to the affirmation that neither country could agree to a hegemony by any power in any part of the world.

Secretary Kissinger: That was a change from the Shanghai communique.

President Ceausescu: I realize that.

Secretary Kissinger: It wasn't noted in our press, though there were a few thoughtful people who caught it.

President Ceausescu: There's still time for others to notice it.

Of course, one has to understand the role of the big countries like the United States and the USSR in matters of detente. At the same time one can't help being very concerned that this collaboration between the big powers, which is so necessary, at the same

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not effect the interests of other countries. Of course there are special problems in Europe and in Asia. There are obligations which the United States, the Soviet Union, China all have but they must take account, too, of the interests of each region. It is difficult to state with assurance that some countries in the world have completely given up some of their objectives. Sometimes, of course, things are very clear, but in any case no practical activity, no carrying out of firm commitments, no applying of commitments in practice is fully useful unless it leads to an elimination of differences and the elimination of lack of clarity.

From my standpoint we can only welcome the development of good relations between the President and the Secretary-General of the Soviet Communist Party. From the very first we have been for the development of such relations. At the same time we would not want anyone to conclude that, as a part of these good relations between the United States and the Soviet Union, all the problems between socialist countries and the United States, in Europe or in other parts of the world, could be solved.

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At this point, President Ceausescu asked that the interpreters no longer take notes. He indicated that Romania was still encountering difficulties from the part of the Soviet Union. Specifically, he went on to mention a meeting that took place in Prague some five months ago where the Soviet Union applied considerable pressure to the Eastern European Communist countries to force the pace of integration. The President then asked him whether he felt the Soviets therefore had not abandoned the Brezhnev Doctrine. To this Ceausescu replied that they clearly had not, as indicated by their push for greater integration. Bulgaria was already being treated as the seventeenth republic of the USSR. The President then inquired about the Chinese, whether they had a Brezhnev Doctrine of their own. Ceausescu replied that they did not, certainly at the present. The President noted that in the past there had been some signs of Chinese adventurism, in places like Indonesia and Thailand, Ceausescu went on to say that, of course, no one knows how things will change. What is certain is that they will.

The President then remarked that the most profound thing President Ceausescu had said was regarding the inevitability of change. The President continued by stating that, while we cannot know what a later Chinese role might turn out to be, it is important now that the Chinese have both an independent and powerful role in the world and that they not be dominated by any of their neighbors. The President noted that, without casting any aspersions, he could not of course speak for the Soviet Union, but so far as the United States is concerned, he wished to repeat his earlier assurances that we would not agree in our discussions with any large power to any actions which would jeopardize the interests of other countries like Romania. This has been the basis and the cornerstone of the United States' foreign policy. (At this point the interpreters resumed taking notes.)

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President Nixon:

The President and I will meet again tomorrow at 11:00 a.m. There are many things still to talk about - the Middle East, European Security, MBFR.

President Ceausescu:

There are two small points that I would like to raise now, Mr. President. One has to deal with your signing the communique -- the declaration, I mean, which has a great importance for us because it touches on some of the very principles which we have been discussing. The fact that we would both sign it would have a significance because it would show how the United States considers the matter of the independence of states regardless of size. The United States undoubtedly will have occasion to sign statements with other smaller countries, so why not begin with Romania? In any case you recall, Mr. President, that you had signed a statement when you were in Bucharest. You have since signed one with the Soviet Union, and I would hope you could sign one here now with us.

President Nixon:

Yes, I would be prepared to do that.
(Turning to Secretary Kissinger) Would you please arrange to have the statement ready for our signing tomorrow.

President Ceausescu:

The second, much less important, question is whether, Mr. President, you might be able to participate in the dinner or reception (Ceausescu indicated that the type of function would depend upon whether the President could participate) which I would hope to give tomorrow evening.

President Nixon:

(After conferring with the Secretary)
Secretary Kissinger will be in touch with you about this question.

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Washington, D.C. 20520

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(eyes only).
Retain all others here
save these cover sheets with

DEPARTMENT OF STATE

D.C. 20520

December 7, 1973

Memorandum of conversation
of days' talks at the
Ceausescu.

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in session on page 9. I
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The remainder of the conversation would
then be handled as SECRET/EXDIS. Alternatively, the
whole memorandum could be treated as NODIS.

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and remainder of memorandum
as EXDIS Yes _____ No _____

Treat whole memorandum as NODIS
Yes _____ No _____

I propose that we provide copies of the memorandum
(both parts) to Ken Rush, Bill Porter and Art Hartman
when he arrives, as well as to Brent Scowcroft, and
Ambassador-designate Barnes.

Approve _____

Disapprove _____

LSE Concur _____

Thomas R. Pickering

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DEPARTMENT OF STATE

Washington, D.C. 20520

SECRET

December 7, 1973

THE SECRETARY:

Attached is the memorandum of conversation prepared covering the first days' talks at the White House with President Ceausescu.

Approve for HK

Disapprove _____

Approve with changes _____

That part of the conversation for which President Ceausescu requests that no notes be taken I have included in summary fashion on page 9. I would suggest we treat that page as a separate NODIS memorandum. The remainder of the conversation would then be handled as SECRET/EXDIS. Alternatively, the whole memorandum could be treated as NODIS.

Treat Page 9 as NODIS Yes _____ No _____

and remainder of memorandum
as EXDIS Yes _____ No _____Treat whole memorandum as NODIS
Yes _____ No _____

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Approve _____

Disapprove _____

LSE Concur _____

Thomas R. PickeringSECRET

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SECRET/NODIS

December 4, 1973

MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

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President Nixon: (As the Secretary, Foreign Minister Macovescu and Mr. Barnes entered the room), we were just remarking how much the world had changed since 1967 and 1969 when we began dealing with each other -- changed not only insofar as Romanian-American relations are concerned but in general. But our both countries have been adopting a policy aimed at true peace in the world for countries large and small. I was recalling too how President Ceausescu had been of help in a number of questions.

President Ceausescu: Much has indeed changed, but it is a fact that Romania and the United State have proceeded in the same direction and that you have sustained that

policy on the part of the United States. In fact there are new problems now just beginning to appear which impose a different accent upon the world scene. These changes raise certain questions. There are some people who have gotten accustomed to the old ways of doing things. Others are not so successful in understanding the wisdom of change or the deeper sense implicit in change. To be frank, some of these questions are justified. The whole world greeted the visit you paid to China and the normalization of relations with China. Romania was among these. Many others greeted your trip to the Soviet Union, the series of agreements that you reached with the Soviets and the subsequent visit of the Secretary-General of the Soviet Communist Party to the United States. Here again Romania was among those who welcomed these developments.

But certainly there are those who put the question whether this new course of development in relations with the USSR and China will not be accomplished at the detriment of others. It's a difficult question to dismiss out of hand. The whole world knows that the United States, China and the USSR are big powers with an important role to play. Therefore reaching agreements among them has a powerful influence on all of international life. Recognizing this I still think that there is justification for the thought that one must not lose sight of the fact that there are a number of other states in various stages of development. These other states must not be ignored, and Romania is one of them.

This new tendency which is now appearing can be consolidated to the extent that account is taken of the need to respect the rights of other states which are affected by the dealings of the great powers. We hope that this cooperation between the United States and the USSR and the United States and China will be extended in this direction so as to make a strong contribution to the development of international life.

These are sentiments which I do not hide from either the Chinese or the Soviets. In fact I make them the subject of all the meetings I have with political leaders and with chiefs of state. These then are some of my more general thoughts.

President Nixon: We have to recognize that my visit to the People's Republic of China, while generally approved, was not particularly appreciated in some quarters. There were no official pronouncements indicating disapproval but there are some shortsighted leaders - I am not referring to any specific ones - who take the view that all that matters are good relations between their own country and the United States even though this is at the expense of bad relations with other countries. The breakthrough with China was significant because it was contrary to that philosophy.

We are also in an interesting predicament in that our meetings with Soviet leaders have not met with universal approval in the non-Socialist countries of Europe. Before I first came to office, and when I was first in office, every European leader said we ought to seek detente with the Soviet Union, that the poor relations between the United States and the Soviet Union were the cause of tensions in Europe. So when the United States does develop different relations with the USSR some European leaders object to what they call detente because this could mean a condominium by the super powers at the expense of others. But they can't have it both ways.

President Ceausescu: To clarify, are you saying that there cannot be detente without condominium?

President Nixon: What it really means is that we can have detente without condominium. That is the best of both worlds. It is a very short-range policy and a nearsighted policy to welcome confrontation between the United States and the USSR. It is important to note in our communique after my visit to China and in the statement issued after Dr. Kissinger's recent visit, as well as in the agreement with

the Soviet Union to prevent nuclear war was that we were very careful to include language respecting and protecting the rights of all nations, large and small, from being jeopardized by these agreements. The difficulty, of course, is that everyone is suspicious of everyone else, but I can assure you, Mr. President, that, in my talks I have with other leaders where we discuss Romania or countries like Romania, I stand absolutely firm for your independence and sovereignty and firmly against any policy of any nation which might threaten your independence or sovereignty. We recognize your special problems. You have powerful neighbors. I do not suggest they have any designs on your independence. But it is important to bear in mind that so far as the United States is concerned no country, large or small, need have any fear that we will use our power or the diplomacy backed by our power for the purpose of dominating other countries or infringing on their independence. That is the cornerstone of American foreign policy as I have developed it. This applies to the People's Republic of China, to other countries, to Romania, to other nations in Europe and in the Middle East.

You see, the danger that the world could face is that the United States and the Soviet Union, the super powers, with their ability to destroy each other and other powers as well, might because of shortsighted attitudes, make arrangements to have good relations between each other be the dominant consideration, even at the expense of relations with other nations not in the super power class. That is a philosophy we reject. I want to be very candid. I have good relations with Mr. Brezhnev and hope to make them better. Neither he nor I have any illusions as to the fact that our interests collide in various parts of the world, in Europe, so far as the People's Republic of China is concerned, in the Middle East. What we have to do is to see that our collisions don't result in an explosion. Therefore a continuing dialogue is important. So our policy is like the man on the high wire -- we have to be very careful not to let ourselves tilt too far in one direction or the other.

But there is still the fundamental basis of our policy which will never change. We will not make any deals with any major power which would destroy or jeopardize the independence or sovereign rights of other countries. That is the basis and cornerstone of American foreign policy. I do not say this just because we are old friends and speak frankly or because the United States is more idealistic than other countries, or simply from the goodness of our hearts, although I would like to believe we have ideals. I say this because in the world in which we live if adventurism by great powers is allowed to have free reign eventually it will lead to a world conflict.

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understand the responsibilities which these countries as large countries have in international life -- countries with a huge military potential. We also understand the need for action to be taken which would avoid confrontations that would have repercussions for the entire world.

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I had a conversation with a chief of state with whom we have good relations and with whom you have good relations as well, and he told me that he was prepared to do whatever was required to maintain his country's independence, even if it meant turning that country into a desert. There is no question that attitudes of countries which think like this will have some influence. I have noted with great satisfaction the statement that you made, Mr. President, that the United States is in favor of a policy which would never affect the sovereignty and independence of other states and I would like to thank you for your statement that in no case would the United States think of putting the independence of Romania in jeopardy.

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President Nixon: Which passages?

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problems in Europe and in Asia. There are obligations which the United States, the Soviet Union, China all have but they must take account, too, of the interests of each region. It is difficult to state with assurance that some countries in the world have completely given up some of their objectives. Sometimes, of course, things are very clear, but in any case no practical activity, no carrying out of firm commitments, no applying of commitments in practice is fully useful unless it leads to an elimination of differences and the elimination of lack of clarity.

From my standpoint we can only welcome the development of good relations between the President and the Secretary-General of the Soviet Communist Party. From the very first we have been for the development of such relations. At the same time we would not want anyone to conclude that, as a part of these good relations between the United States and the Soviet Union, all the problems between socialist countries and the United States, in Europe or in other parts of the world, could be solved.

At this point, President Ceausescu asked that the interpreters no longer take notes. He indicated that Romania was still encountering difficulties from the part of the Soviet Union. Specifically, he went on to mention a meeting that took place in Prague some five months ago where the Soviet Union applied considerable pressure to the Eastern European Communist countries to force the pace of integration. The President then asked him whether he felt the Soviets therefore had not abandoned the Brezhnev Doctrine. To this Ceausescu replied that they clearly had not, as indicated by their push for greater integration. Bulgaria was already being treated as the seventeenth republic of the USSR. The President then inquired about the Chinese, whether they had a Brezhnev Doctrine of their own. Ceausescu replied that they did not, certainly at the present. The President noted that in the past there had been some signs of Chinese adventurism, in places like Indonesia and Thailand, Ceausescu went on to say that, of course, no one knows how things will change. What is certain is that they will.

The President then remarked that the most profound thing President Ceausescu had said was regarding the inevitability of change. The President continued by stating that, while we cannot know what a later Chinese role might turn out to be, it is important now that the Chinese have both an independent and powerful role in the world and that they not be dominated by any of their neighbors. The President noted that, without casting any aspersions, he could not of course speak for the Soviet Union, but so far as the United States is concerned, he wished to repeat his earlier assurances that we would not agree in our discussions with any large power to any actions which would jeopardize the interests of other countries like Romania. This has been the basis and the cornerstone of the United States' foreign policy. (At this point the interpreters resumed taking notes.)

President Nixon: The president and I will meet again tomorrow at 11:00 a.m. There are many things still to talk about - the Middle East, European Security, MBFR.

President Ceausescu: There are two small points that I would like to raise now, Mr. President. One has to deal with your signing the communique - the declaration, I mean, which has a great importance for us because it touches on some of the very principles which we have been discussing. The fact that we would both sign it would have a significance because it would show how the United States considers the matter of the independence of states regardless of size. The United States undoubtedly will have occasion to sign statements with other smaller countries, so why not begin with Romania? In any case you recall, Mr. President, that you had signed a statement when you were in Bucharest. You have since signed one with the Soviet Union, and I would hope you could sign one here now with us.

President Nixon: Yes, I would be prepared to do that. (Turning to Secretary Kissinger) Would you please arrange to have the statement ready for our signing tomorrow.

President Ceausescu: The second, much less important, question is whether, Mr. President, you might be able to participate in the dinner or reception (Ceausescu indicated that the type of function would depend upon whether the President could participate) which I would hope to give tomorrow evening.

President Nixon: (After conferring with the Secretary) Secretary Kissinger will be in touch with you about this question.

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