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**From the Journal of A.F. Dobrynin, 'Record of a
Conversation with US Secretary of State H.
Kissinger, 6 October 1973'**

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Summary:

Dobrynin summarizes two conversations with Henry Kissinger about the conflict between Israel and Egypt and Syria. Kissinger claims that the Soviet Union knew in advance of the Arab intention to go to war.

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RECORD OF A CONVERSATION
 with US Secretary of State H. KISSINGER
 6 October 1973

First. Some time after the conversation earlier in the day with Gen. Scowcroft Kissinger, who had returned from New York, called me and asked me to once again present to him the reply from Moscow that had previously been conveyed to Scowcroft.

I did this.

Kissinger's reaction was quite emotional. He expressed extreme dissatisfaction with such a response by us, trying to present the matter as if our response was evidence of our reluctance to coordinate actions with the President to resolve the military conflict which had broken out and about our supposed "readiness, incomprehensible to them, to even sacrifice our relations with the President in the name of a dubious friendship with Arab leaders who are ready to betray anyone and everyone."

In this regard, Kissinger tried to present the fact of the evacuation of Soviet families from Syria and Egypt as evidence that we knew in advance about the impending Arab offensive, but had not informed the American side and President Nixon personally about this in confidence, although "there were convenient occasions in recent days for such confidential discussions." This circumstance, he said, made "an unpleasant impression on the President from the point of view of the confidentiality of his relations with the Soviet leadership."

I decisively rejected this formulation of the question and, in general, Kissinger's interpretation of our position, showing with facts that it does not correspond to reality. He expressed his obvious surprise that he was almost trying to cast doubt on Soviet-American relations because of events that were not directed or encouraged by us, which the White House is undoubtedly aware of, and also because that we doubt the advisability of convening the Security Council, and the validity of the reasons we have outlined, including taking into account the Soviet-American aspect, should be completely obvious to him.

In this regard, I called on Kissinger to calmly and seriously consider the situation, because vehemence in such matters will not lead to anything good. I added that we proceed in our relations with the White House from the fact that these relations now have a serious, solid basis as a result of consistent mutual efforts on the part of the leadership of both countries, and that these relations should not be called into question under the influence of some momentary and temporary factors. This is the only way to build our relationship.

Silent for a while, Kissinger then said he would report to the President about the

response from Moscow and about our conversation with him (Nixon is now in Florida on a short vacation).

Second. About an hour after this, Kissinger called me again. He spoke more calmly.

He said that he had discussed the developing situation in detail with the President and that in this regard they asked to convey the following to the Soviet leadership.

It is not entirely clear to the President and to him, Kissinger, "to be frank," what the Soviet leadership is proceeding from in its attitude to the unfolding events. This is not so much about the Soviet position for today, but about the position in some perspective, taking into account further developments in the coming days.

At the moment they understand our answer in the sense that we do not want to convene the Security Council now. Apparently, Kissinger continued, this position was taken by the Soviet side under the influence of its Arab friends, who, as is now clear, prefer, instead of convening the Security Council, to start a broad public discussion in the UN General Assembly, where they apparently count on an audience more favorable to their position. This Arab approach is evidenced by the fact that Egyptian Foreign Minister Zayyat has already signed up to speak first on Monday [October 8] in the General Assembly discussion on the Middle East, but rejects a Security Council meeting. In this respect they can understand our position, although they do not agree with such an approach.

However, Kissinger continued, if you look at the situation from an overall strategic point of view and from the standpoint of assessing how current events are most likely to end, then the White House does not understand the Soviet position of actually granting freedom to further military actions.

According to all American military assessments (and they have just held an emergency conference in the White House with the involvement of the Pentagon and US intelligence services) the Arabs should unavoidably lose this conflict if it continues for any length of time.

According to recent American information the Israelis have already halted the offensive of the Egyptians and Syrians in practically all sectors where it was conducted, he said. Sunday, 7 October, and possibly part of Monday will be required for additional reserves and a concentration of heavy weapons.

Then, Kissinger said, Israel would launch a decisive counteroffensive. According to US military estimates on Tuesday or Wednesday [October 9 or 10] the Arabs will not only be pushed back to the original positions [they occupied] before the offensive, but Israeli troops have every chance of developing a successful offensive beyond the armistice line deep into the territory of Egypt and Syria, in the direction of Cairo and Damascus.

Therefore, Kissinger said, they in the White House believe that already on Tuesday or Wednesday the situation in the conflict area will change so much that then the Arabs will be very interested in a ceasefire and in convening the Security Council for this purpose. From a military-strategic point of view, the American military is absolutely confident that this is exactly what will happen.

As if in passing, at this point Kissinger noted that at present they are holding back the Israelis so that they do not carry out deep bombing of the territory of Egypt and Syria, but limit the combat operations of their aircraft only directly to the fighting area at the armistice line. But by Monday or on Tuesday, when Israel's counter-offensive operations begin, they, the US will not be able to guarantee that even then there will be no bombing of the deep regions of Arab countries, and maybe even Cairo and Damascus.

Of course, Kissinger continued, when by that time the Soviet side begins to actively support the Arab insistence on convening the Security Council to stop the Israeli offensive, the White House could gloat, but that's not the point. We want to avoid everything that, wittingly or unwittingly, will cause great damage to Soviet-American relations.

Therefore, he said further, we propose to you now that you influence the Arabs before it is too late. After all, the Arabs have already quite dramatically demonstrated to the whole world that the situation in the Middle East is truly complex and dangerous, that they are ready to do anything themselves to return their lands and that everyone

must deal with the solution to the Middle East issue more persistently and more actively. In light of this, their, the Arabs' agreement to a ceasefire now and a return to the armistice line would be a gesture of strength, not weakness, and would be correctly received in the world, contributing to the beginning of the settlement process.

We would like, Kissinger said, for the Soviet Union to make precisely such recommendations to its Arab friends in a form it deems necessary in order to facilitate a rapid cessation of hostilities, the speedy start of active negotiations to resolve the entire problem, and also to avoid public discussion at the UN, which would drag the American press into this whole matter, which would complicate not only the Middle East situation, but also Soviet-American relations.

[...]

Summarizing today's conversations with Kissinger, it needs to be said that of course much will depend on the further development of the military situation in the current conflict. The Israelis, of course, are unlikely to accept even the appearance of a military, even partial, defeat from the Arabs. In this regard, one must be prepared for the fact that the situation in the future may develop unfavorably for the Arab countries (although Kissinger's predictions contained certain elements of a coercive nature).

At the moment, when there are military successes on the Arab side, the possibility remains that the Arabs will receive political dividends for these successes in the form of revitalizing the matter of a Middle Eastern political settlement. Obviously, this moment should not be missed.

It is not in our interests, of course, for a possible settlement in the future to be limited to only the Americans, who are already contacting the Egyptians on these issues directly, while we remain on the sidelines.

In this regard, on our part, it would be possible, for example, to propose - as practical immediate steps to end the current military conflict - to urgently convene an international conference (like the Paris Conference on Vietnam) on a settlement in the Middle East, consisting of countries participating in the conflict in the Middle East (Egypt, Syria, Jordan, and Israel) and the five great powers with the aim of working out the principles of a general settlement based on UN decisions.

As an intermediate step, it would be possible to propose a temporary ceasefire (until the end of the work of the conference) keeping the troops in those positions where such a ceasefire will occur (this is, of course, only in the event of a success of the offensive of the Arab forces).

Such an option would introduce a somewhat new element into the situation with the Middle East settlement and would make it possible to transfer the initial military successes of the Arabs to the political plane and in due course prevent a possible development of the military situation unfavorable for the Arabs.

In this context, it is advisable for us to continue the confidential dialogue with the White House. This is important for keeping our finger on the pulse of current events in the Middle East and their subsequent resolution. This is also important from the point of view of the further development of Soviet-American relations.

SOVIET AMBASSADOR IN THE US
(A. DOBRYNIN)