

October 13, 1973

**From the Journal of A.F. Dobrynin, 'Record of a
Conversation with US Secretary of State H.
Kissinger, 13 October 1973'**

Citation:

"From the Journal of A.F. Dobrynin, 'Record of a Conversation with US Secretary of State H. Kissinger, 13 October 1973'", October 13, 1973, Wilson Center Digital Archive, AVPRF, f. 0129, op. 57, p. 431, d. 7, ll. 178-180. Contributed by Sergey Radchenko and translated by Gary Goldberg. <https://digitalarchive.umd.edu/document/300704>

Summary:

Dobrynin and Kissinger review the situation in the Middle East and the impact of the Arab-Israeli war on Soviet-American relations.

Credits:

This document was made possible with support from Blavatnik Family Foundation

Original Language:

Russian

Contents:

Translation - English

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

Kissinger called me on the telephone and said the following.

The President expresses his deepest regret that their efforts in the contacts with us to find a peaceful solution to the Middle East crisis on the basis of our countries not receiving unilateral advantages have not been crowned with success.

The approach to a solution through the Security Council which the Soviet Union is now proposing was proposed to President Nixon on Wednesday by Sadat himself through [Sadat's national security adviser Mohammed Hafez] Ismail, adding various details about a possible peace conference.

The United States then rejected it as unacceptable. They reject such an approach even now, although Sadat is now doing it with Soviet hands.

The President hoped for the restraining influence of the Soviet Union on the Arabs and it was in this regard that he considered the airlift of Soviet weapons and ammunition to the Arabs being performed as a kind of lever for such influence in order to obtain their consent to a ceasefire. However, no such effect has occurred.

A question arises in this regard, what then is the role of the Soviet Union as a great power in ending a dangerous military conflict in the Middle East if it obediently follows all the demands of Sadat, without taking into account that in a few days Sadat himself will begin to ask for a truce, or with the broader and long-term objectives of Soviet-American relations. And the White House was counting on just such a comprehensively balanced role of the Soviet Union when it offered to act with a certain mutual understanding between our countries .

If the Soviet Union is really forced, for one reason or another, to share Sadat's point of view one hundred percent, and the White House has no right to argue with this, then it may be easier for the United States to deal directly with Sadat, since the USSR itself does not say anything on its own behalf, but only passes on the point of view of the President of Egypt or precisely follows all his wishes. They talk about this not with the aim of somehow offending Moscow or hurting its pride, but as a real statement of a fact that cannot be ignored

They regret this development. What is happening now is the most serious crisis in relations at the highest level between our countries.

Kissinger said emphatically that they would undoubtedly veto the resolution referred to in the Soviet message about which Sadat himself had told them a few days ago, and would strongly oppose it in the Security Council, regardless of any consequences.

The White House will not soon forget that the Soviet Union deliberately forced it to vote against the resolution, exposing President Nixon to the fire of criticism from the Arab countries. And the President sincerely hoped for some kind of agreement with

the help of the USSR, subordinating all his actions over the past week to this.

The position of the White House, Kissinger stated further, remains as before a ceasefire at actually occupied positions. It is possible, in extreme cases, to make an additional reference in the draft resolution to a subsequent withdrawal of troops (perhaps in stages) in accordance with Security Council Resolution 242.

[“]We will not agree to the other thing, that is, the reference to the 1967 borders in this resolution,” Kissinger emphasized, even if this means a clash with the Arabs and the Soviet Union. The situation within the country does not allow the US government to do otherwise. Israel will not agree to this either, especially in the current situation.

On Monday, Kissinger added, the President will convene an expanded meeting of the National Security Council to discuss the situation in the Middle East and further US steps in this connection. Some decisions will be announced. One would be the US government's explanation to its public why the White House was slow with its vital military supplies to Israel, despite the corresponding demands from the US Congress to do so: The White House will say that it had hoped - in negotiations with the USSR - to achieve an end to the bloodshed through the adoption of a Security Council ceasefire resolution with subsequent negotiations for a peaceful settlement. Nothing came of this due to the unacceptable demands of the Arabs and the USSR. Therefore, the US government adopted a decision about military supplies to Israel.

Such a message, he added, would of course provoke a wave of anti-Soviet reactions in the country, but the government no longer has another way out, based on its own needs to effectively control the situation, because for several days US public opinion has been persistently and emotionally demanding more substantive assistance to Israel, especially in the face of the refusal of the Arab countries to agree to a ceasefire.

Kissinger said in conclusion that, frankly speaking, it surprises him that we are ready to sacrifice much in Soviet-American relations for the sake of the momentary success of Sadat, who is a quite unreliable and mercurial person.

This also surprises President Nixon, who for almost a week held back pressure on him from the most varied sides for more effective assistance to Israel, because he hoped for what the General Secretary told him regarding the key point: a ceasefire. After this, active negotiations on a general settlement would begin. Now the Soviet Union unexpectedly changes its position and again takes a position that is knowingly unacceptable for the President, especially in these conditions. The President will be forced to draw his own conclusions from all this.

I told Kissinger that he knows very well what our position is regarding Soviet-American relations as well as our principled approach to a solution of the Middle East conflict. We have never bent the truth or deceived the President.

I further emphasized the thought that Soviet-American relations cannot be held hostage for the sake of a more beneficial conflict. On the contrary, a just solution to this conflict will in the final account benefit Israel itself, which will finally gain peace and tranquility based on good neighborly relations with Arab countries. Soviet-American relations will only benefit from this.

Kissinger said he had nothing more to say. He has already presented their position in detail. If Moscow deems it necessary to say something concrete before Monday, then they are ready to listen to it. If not, then the White House will not be offended, but will proceed at the meeting of the National Security Council from the current situation when determining its own course of action.

During the conversation, Kissinger, to illustrate the pressure that is being put on the US government right now, quoted an excerpt from Senator [Henry] Jackson's upcoming speech in Los Angeles tomorrow. He read out the passage where Kissinger is accused of having too much faith in the Russians, trying to maintain “detente” with the USSR, and that such a position of his was blocking massive US military aid to Israel; Jackson demagogically declares: “Let Kissinger publicly admit how many thousands of Israeli soldiers his belief in Russian assurances cost their lives.”

Kissinger also referred to another example, when the Israeli Embassy, dissatisfied with the fact that the White House had now imposed an agreement for a ceasefire on Tel Aviv, secretly let a number of pro-Israeli senators know about this, who had

already told the White House of their intention to hold public hearings next week in which they intended to oppose a ceasefire if it involves leaving the Suez Canal behind the Egyptian troops. Such a situation, the senators intend to publicly emphasize, threatens the national security of the United States, because the militarily strategically important Canal will end up in the hands of the Russians.

Kissinger noted that he was telling us of this not to gain sympathy from us, but for an understanding in Moscow of that quite excited situation which is developing in the US around current events, regardless of how justified this excitement is or not.

Kissinger added "outside the official framework" that he, frankly, expected a different course of action from us, namely: The Soviet government accepts all of the President's assurances expressed by Kissinger yesterday (regarding military supplies to Israel, US military non-intervention, etc.) and thus sort of fixes them, that is, significantly limits the possible scope of the conflict. Then he goes to Sadat and convinces him, on this basis and on the basis of the large Soviet military supplies already given to Egypt, to accept a ceasefire, which the White House had to work hard to get agreement from Israel. Then Sadat would have begun negotiations on a general settlement from a more favorable position than Israel, since he had regained the Canal by force.

Things are more complicated with Syria, he added, but an acceptable outcome might be found with mutual coordinated actions.

Now, Kissinger noted, the latest Soviet message ("which, as we understand, was entirely dictated by Sadat, intoxicated with unexpected success") will cause great joy in Golda Meir and [Israeli defense minister Moshe] Dayan, because the latter believe that they will all the same win the conflict inasmuch, they say, in the event of a prolongation of the conflict, American public opinion has forced the US government to provide comprehensive support to Israel, although the government did not want to do this so as not to aggravate relations with the Arabs.

It was felt that this last reason - the reluctance to aggravate relations with the Arabs - played an important role in the White House's tactics in recent days and that it was precisely this circumstance that caused Nixon and Kissinger to be particularly irritated by our last message, because it now confronted them with the need to use a veto. which they sought and hoped to avoid through negotiations with us.

During the discussion, clearly getting excited, at one point Kissinger said that we were acting with him, with the White House, "insincerely": we were giving them the impression of our "difficult negotiations" with the Arabs in favor of a ceasefire without additional conditions, but we ourselves are coming to agreement with Sadat on a different course of action which is pleasing to the Arabs.

He also asserted that the President and he, the Secretary of State, were unpleasantly surprised when they received information (from the Jordanians) that during their official meetings with Arab ambassadors, N.V. Podgorny and A.A. Gromyko made "very inflammatory statements" in favor of a continuation of the conflict and directly against the United States.

I resolutely rejected such an interpretation of the conversations between our [SIC] President and our Minister. In response to my demand to provide concrete evidence of such accusations, Kissinger was essentially unable to say anything definite, except for references to the fact that the Soviet statesmen had strongly criticized "American imperialism."

I told him that we have always criticized and continue to criticize imperialism, including American [imperialism], for certain actions directed against the interests of peoples.

This episode is interesting from the point of view that it is apparently indicative of the general psychological atmosphere currently emerging in the White House around Soviet-American relations due to the events in the Middle East.

It is becoming more and more obvious that Kissinger himself, a generally intelligent man, has apparently all these days held certain illusions that we could still be persuaded to take all measures to ensure that the Arabs agreed to a ceasefire, "followed by negotiations" and thereby not bring the United States to [the point of] a veto in the Security Council and to sending large military supplies to Israel, that is, to a collision course with the Arab world.

Kissinger, of course, understood that the deterioration in Arab-American relations connected with this did not really worry us, but he clearly counted on our still being, to a certain extent, ready to cooperate with them on the question of a ceasefire in the name of averting tension in Soviet-American relations.

Undoubtedly, Kissinger also convinced Nixon of similar conclusions. The danger here for our relations is that Kissinger may now try to justify his miscalculation to the President not by the mistakenness of his own points of departure in these forecasts, but by the fact that Moscow was "insincere" with them and was simultaneously playing a "double game" with the United States, supporting the Arabs and Sadat personally at the same time.

Judging from everything, this will leave its mark on the future relations between the White House and Moscow for some period of time.

SOVIET AMBASSADOR IN THE US

(A. DOBRYNIN)