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**From the Journal of A.F. Dobrynin, 'Record of a
Conversation with US President R. Nixon and
Secretary of State H. Kissinger, 30 October 1973'**

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Summary:

Dobrynin recounts several conversations with Nixon and Kissinger about Soviet-American relations and resolving the crisis in the Middle East.

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RECORD OF A CONVERSATION
with US President R. Nixon and Secretary of State H. KISSINGER
30 October 1973

1.

On the evening of October 30 I met with President Nixon at Camp David, where he invited me to discuss the last message of L. I. Brezhnev and the general state of Soviet-American relations.

The conversation lasted more than two and a half hours without interpreters. Kissinger and General Haig, the President's "chief of staff", were present, but they took practically no part in the conversation.

The conversation began with Nixon asking [me] to present our point of view.

In this regard, I first read that part of L. I. Brezhnev's message, which says that "a crisis of confidence has come upon" him and his comrades.

The President listened to this with great attention. It was clear that such a frank address from the General Secretary made a considerable impression on him. (At the same time, Kissinger was clearly dissatisfied and then became gloomy when it came to the possibility of the false information mentioned in the message being received by the President).

Although in the course of the further presentation Nixon had to listen to a number of our additional sharp and unpleasant assessments of the White House's behavior over the past week, on the whole the President reacted with an emphasis on the positive, on the future, which was also discussed in our statement to the President.

In response to our critical part, Nixon stated that "he fully understands that things (about American behavior) could have been perceived in Moscow in exactly this way by the Soviet leadership and by the General Secretary personally, but that from the American angle they looked different, which ultimately led to unpleasant and unnecessary complications."

Nixon noticeably tried to keep the conversation conciliatory and not aggravate it. I also structured my conversation in such a way as not to aggravate it unnecessarily, bearing in mind the need to preserve the constructive elements in Soviet-American relations and in relations with the President personally, but at the same time I consistently outlined to him our entire assessment of their behavior in connection with the events in the Middle East, especially in connection with the White House's move to bring the US armed forces into increased readiness.

The President justified this action with various reasons, but did not do so particularly convincingly or energetically.

The second part of the conversation was devoted to current events and generalizations for the future. In this part of the conversation he made a number of clear points.

If his main statements are briefly summarized, they come down to the following recapitulation, which he himself made at the end of the conversation for transmission to L. I. Brezhnev.

1. He, the President, is firmly intent on continuing his course towards improving relations with the Soviet Union, despite the events of the last week, which, although a very unpleasant episode, were still only, in his opinion, an episode in our relations. And these relations are defined by all that good that has been done jointly over the past five years and that will undoubtedly be done jointly in the remaining three years (until the end of his presidency), including in the Middle East, in Europe, and in the area of bilateral relations. In particular, he reiterates to the General Secretary that he will not rest until the Soviet Union receives most favored nation status, although this will now require much more time than he, the President, initially expected.

2. He, the President, is not ready to immediately give an answer to two proposals stated by the Soviet Ambassador (about Soviet-American political representatives in Egypt and about the delivery of food and medicine to the Third Army by sending helicopters and planes under the UN flag). He will try to give an answer tomorrow in his letter of reply to the General Secretary. In the meantime, after a conversation with him, the President, he has invited me to continue a preliminary discussion of these questions with Kissinger.

3. He, the President, fully confirms the agreement reached on his behalf by Kissinger in Moscow and his readiness to implement it.

4. He proceeds from the premise that Israel will have to "eventually" withdraw to the original October 22 line. This will apparently happen at the next stage.

(Here Kissinger interrupted and said that he would like to "clarify the President's words." "In order to avoid misunderstandings with Moscow in the future" The meaning of Kissinger's further rather bombastic statements boiled down to the fact that he also expressed his confidence that within the next week the question of the truce and the withdrawal of Israeli troops "will be finally settled," but that they will still need several days of intensive negotiations with both Cairo and Tel Aviv for this, since there are several other questions involved; these negotiations are already underway and being conducted actively and, he hopes, quite successfully. More detailed comments by Kissinger, which he made in a separate conversation with me, are reported below).

5. He, the President, is not undertaking to resolve such organizational issues as this or that provision, such as this or that provision of everything the 3rd Egyptian Army needs. He simply does not have the ability - he hopes that he will be understood correctly in Moscow - to deal with all such matters, although he completely agrees with the humanitarian side of the issue.

At the same time, he asks, as his general approach, that it be conveyed to L. I. Brezhnev that he will not allow the surrender of this Army, which, apparently, Israel would like to achieve as a result of the events unleashed after the Security Council decision on a ceasefire.

6. He, the President, fully confirms his readiness, together with L. I. Brezhnev and the other Soviet leaders, to put into effect an agreement on organizing and conducting negotiations on a final Middle East settlement under Soviet-American auspices.

In recent days, the White House has received several private [*neglasnye*] proposals from various countries (he did not specify them) which believe that they should also be included in the "aegis" for the negotiations to succeed. However, he, the President, as before proceeds from the fact that only Moscow and Washington can really influence events in the Middle East, and others here will only be "fifth wheels".

7. It is this stage, negotiations about a final settlement, that he, the President, considers the most difficult for himself, because for the first time he will have to apply brutal pressure on Israel, since without this, the Israeli leaders will not agree to a just settlement, relying on the very active pro-Israeli circles in the United States, including the American Congress.

This, the President said, explains the fact that on the issue of a truce and the return of Israeli troops to the positions on October 22 (when there was the first Security Council decision about a ceasefire), I did not resort to full pressure on Israel so as not to antagonize Tel Aviv and all those who support the Israelis in the United States right

away, because this could have from the very beginning undermined my subsequent efforts, which will be necessary to force Israel to agree to a final peace settlement.

This does not mean, Nixon added, that I am not now putting pressure on Israel to comply with the Security Council resolution that was the result of the Soviet-American agreement. I am doing this, but I am doing it in combination with certain tactical steps in order to achieve the withdrawal of its troops to the positions on October 22 without serious complications with Israel and its vocal lobby in the United States. And I think that this whole issue will be resolved in the next week, and you and I will no longer have to argue about this any more, the President added.

8. In conclusion, President Nixon asked me to convey to Moscow that he has always regarded and still regards L. I. Brezhnev with great respect who, as is now clearly evident, was right when he presciently told him, the President, at three o'clock in the morning in San Clemente that the Middle East was explosive and war could break out at any moment. I admit that I have long underestimated this danger, Nixon said. He, the President, is confident that further efforts to find an agreed Middle East settlement will further strengthen this respect, which will serve as a solid basis for resolving a number of other questions.

Nixon said that in addition to the message of reply which he would send tomorrow, he also intended to inform the General Secretary of the results of his negotiations with Golda Meir, with whom he would meet at the White House on Thursday.

When I left him, Nixon, upon leaving his house, said the following when we were left alone for a minute in the adjacent courtyard.:

"Tell the General Secretary that as long as I am alive and still in office, I will never allow a real confrontation with the Soviet Union. Perhaps we (the United States) got a little carried away, but, not as an excuse, I will say that I am now under a constant and fierce siege from the opposition and all my opponents, joined together under the pretext of Watergate, but using any opportunity to in some way attack me and further undermine my authority. This, thank God, is unknown to the Soviet leaders, but speaking simply as a human being, at times it is difficult for me."

In conclusion Nixon asked me to pass his greetings to L. I. Brezhnev and the other Soviet leaders.

2.

After the conversation with President Nixon, I had a separate conversation with Kissinger also there at Camp David.

I put additional pressure on Kissinger in favor of our proposal to send two specially appointed representatives from our governments to Egypt, emphasizing, among other things, that this would be a good symbol for American and world public opinion of the continuation of joint Soviet-American actions in the Middle East which were agreed upon in Moscow. This would also silence the growing wave of attacks and speculation in the United States about the "collapse of the policy of détente" in connection with recent events.

After some discussion on this question, Kissinger said, with the reservation that these were still purely his personal considerations, or rather, reasoning out loud, which the President does not know about, that although in principle he was immediately opposed to this idea of sending such representatives, but taking into account the indicated important symbolism, and the possibly the practical expediency for the future, he thinks that there may be a certain rational grain in the plan, that after briefly dealing with the questions of ensuring a ceasefire the indicated Soviet-American representatives could then move on to the role of representatives of the USSR and the US at the negotiations on a final settlement in, let's say, Geneva.

In such an event, Kissinger continued, a definite long-term mission of such representatives could be presented to public opinion: primarily, questions of monitoring the ceasefire, and then participation in the negotiations in continuation of the line agreed upon in Moscow that such negotiations should be under the joint auspices of the USSR and US.

In such a context, he, Kissinger, is ready to consider this question with greater sympathy than in the original version.

In addition, Kissinger further noted, why should these Soviet-American representatives limit themselves to staying only on Egyptian territory? Why don't they, besides Cairo and the ceasefire line from the Egyptian side, look at the situation, so to speak, from the other side, and also visit Tel Aviv?

According to Kissinger, for Soviet representatives similar purposeful contacts with Israel concerning questions of a settlement should not pose a particular problem after the Egyptians themselves now freely meet face to face with the Israelis in the same way. Moreover, such contacts could only further contribute to the success of the negotiations between the Egyptians and Israelis, which will be conducted under our joint auspices.

Kissinger asked if I could get a preliminary reaction from Moscow to these thoughts of his by noon Washington time tomorrow, Wednesday, in development of our proposal.

For the final discussion of this proposal with the President, and also then with G. Meir, who is coming here on Thursday, it is important for him to know in advance how his idea is perceived in Moscow of moving these Soviet-American representatives to direct participation in the negotiations on a settlement, as well as the possibility of them visiting Israel along with Egypt.

He repeated once again that he asks that he be understood correctly, that now these are only his own thoughts, which have not yet been discussed with the President.

3.

The following questions were also touched upon during a separate conversation with Kissinger.

First. He reported that he will fly out early next week to Rabat, Cairo, Amman, Tehran, and will possibly also visit Pakistan, all these on the way to Peking, where he will be from 10 to 13 November. After this, he will visit Japan for two days. He will return to Washington on November 16th.

Second. He is traveling to Cairo at the personal invitation of President Sadat sent via Ismail Fahmy, who has arrived in Washington. In his message to President Nixon, Sadat spoke in the sense that after Kissinger visits Moscow, it was now natural to expect that he would also visit Cairo for a discussion of the Middle East problem directly with the President of Egypt.

Sadat extended an invitation to Kissinger to come to Cairo with his children and parents, [his] father and mother, who could all spend a few days in a resort area near Aswan or some other place in Egypt.

In this regard, Kissinger spoke ironically, but not without pleasure, that the Egyptians are now trying very hard to look after him, apparently hoping that he "can create a miracle for them, but miracles don't happen in the world."

Third. Kissinger noted the following from his conversations with Ismail Fahmy, who had arrived from Cairo. There have already been two such conversations:

1. Expressing some surprise at why Sadat sent Fahmy and not Ismail, whom he, Kissinger, knows better, Kissinger said that in fact Fahmy did not bring anything actually new with him, except for issues related to the rescue of the Egyptian 3rd Army. "We met the wishes of the Egyptians regarding the escort of the convoys."

2. Fahmy did not express any proposals or wishes regarding a postwar settlement. In response to Kissinger's attempt to clarify what the Egyptian position on a settlement was, Fahmy said that he had no instructions on this matter, but he knew that Sadat had his own plan and that the President of Egypt might be planning to personally outline it at the meeting with Kissinger in Cairo.

At the same time, Fahmy tried to find out what the American side had regarding the problem of a settlement. According to Kissinger, he did not enter into a discussion with the Egyptian on this issue at this stage, since he clearly did not have the authority to conduct such a conversation.

3. Kissinger said that, in Fahmy's words, President Sadat had decided to relieve Zayyat of his post as Foreign Minister and in this connection on Sunday he recalled him from New York to Cairo; however he decided to hold off on announcing this.

Sadat is allegedly dissatisfied with Zayyat's behavior at the UN and in general with his activities during his current stay in the US, in particular, in contacts with American official representatives. Fahmy did not say who would be appointed Egypt's new foreign minister, but made it clear that it would probably be him, Fahmy.

4. In Kissinger's words, Fahmy allegedly told him that in the opinion of Cairo, and in particular of Sadat personally, Soviet-American cooperation on the Middle East problem, which began during Kissinger's visit to Moscow, clearly has not worked.

In this regard, according to Kissinger, the Egyptians are now asking the White House whether it would be better to now move the Middle East settlement under the aegis of the four powers: the USSR, the US, France, and Britain (as was the case previously within the UN framework).

Fahmy allegedly said that the Egyptians are now ready to agree to negotiations under the aegis of the five powers, the permanent members of the Security Council, including China, but they fear that the Chinese, by virtue of their support of the Palestinians and the confrontation with the USSR, will argue a lot and will only harm this search for an agreement.

Kissinger noted that Fahmy did not officially propose to transfer the upcoming negotiations under the aegis of the four, but was seeming to express [his] thoughts on this matter out loud, saying that President Sadat would not object to this if the White House considered it more appropriate.

In Kissinger's words, he told Fahmy that the US would not deviate from the agreement reached in Moscow regarding holding negotiations on a Middle East settlement under the aegis of the USSR and the US. They will not abandon this, unless, of course, Moscow itself renounces this agreement.

In Kissinger's words, Fahmy did not touch on this question any more.

5. As Kissinger argued, Fahmy, "with the characteristic Arab habit of playing on Soviet-American differences," criticized the Soviet Union on a number of points during the conversations and at the same time praised the United States, apparently believing that Washington would be pleased to hear this. In Kissinger's words, Fahmy even allegedly said that after a peace settlement, the Egyptian government would be ready to completely abandon Soviet economic assistance and switch entirely to American economic assistance ("as if the US would be very happy about this," Kissinger laughed).

According to an assertion of Kissinger's, Fahmy even allegedly stated - in response to Kissinger's remark about why Cairo did not agree to a ceasefire around 11-13 October, when it had the best military position - that Egypt had considered doing so, but was allegedly stopped from doing this step by Moscow, citing its readiness to continue large Soviet arms supplies.

Kissinger said that he did not particularly believe the Egyptian's version.

6. According to Kissinger, Fahmy told him that in Cairo they knew about practically all the messages sent by the General Secretary of the CPSU Central Committee to the US President on Middle Eastern affairs.

In this regard, Kissinger said, I blame myself for not immediately realizing that the harsh tone of the letter from Moscow on Wednesday, 24 October, in connection with which the events surrounding the announcement of [increased] combat readiness of US troops played out, was intended not so much for President Nixon, but, apparently, as for President Sadat.

As Kissinger said, Fahmy spoke quite frankly (albeit in an unofficial form) that Sadat was and is in constant contact with the Soviet leadership and is trying to use its great international weight to influence on the US President (Kissinger noted that he did not dispute the Egyptian's assertion, if only because over the past two weeks they in the White House had become "accustomed" to the fact that first they received a direct appeal from Sadat to President Nixon, and then two or three hours later an appeal of Moscow came to them on the same question, which was clearly done at the request of Sadat).

Fahmy also allegedly said that they were grateful to the Soviet Union for help and support, but negotiations on the territorial side of the settlement would be led by Sadat himself, and not Moscow. That is why they are inviting Kissinger to Cairo for a

detailed conversation with President Sadat, during which the question of an armistice will also be finally resolved, unless this can be done earlier.

Fourth. In general, from my conversation with Kissinger and his individual remarks on this topic, I was left with the impression that the Americans are now actively working with the Egyptians in the sense that the US, they say, will achieve the withdrawal of Israeli troops to the positions on October 22nd, that is, the moment of the ceasefire, if Egypt gives a commitment to now return the prisoners and not to take certain military measures.

Kissinger did not specify these "military measures," but a certain idea of these demands on Egypt is given by his remark that Israel is now putting pressure on them, the Americans, with the following argument.

If we returned to the line of October 22nd right now, the Israelis say, we would open the way for the Egyptians to also supply the 3rd Egyptian Army with military materials, that is, such dangerous weapons for the Israelis as Soviet anti-aircraft missiles would be sent there. And then the Israeli troops on the western (Cairo) bank would themselves be trapped, because with any resumption of hostilities here by the Egyptians, Israeli aviation would not be able to effectively support these troops due to the fact that all the airspace above them would be raked with fire by anti-aircraft missiles from the eastern and the western banks of the Canal. The Israelis do not want to allow this situation to happen.

Judging by certain remarks from Kissinger, one can draw the conclusion that although right now the Egyptians are now trying to avoid these questions, in which Israel is primarily interested in resolving, in general they are beginning to show a readiness to find an agreement through US mediation.

Apparently, it was also no coincidence that Kissinger made a remark at one point in my conversation with the President that he, Kissinger, thinks that at the beginning of next week the question of implementing the ceasefire decision will be finally resolved, although disputes still remain between the Egyptians and Israelis on some questions (for example, about prisoners of war), which the Israelis would definitely like to connect with their obligation to return to the positions of October 22nd, but the Egyptians do not want to agree to such a formal connection, although in principle they are ready to find appropriate solutions.

SOVIET AMBASSADOR IN THE US

(A. DOBRYNIN)