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 By *J* NARA Date *4/10/87*

THE WHITE HOUSE

1974-9-15, *Hassan, Kissinger, Benhima*

WASHINGTON

SECRET/NODIS (XGDS)

April 15, 1974

MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

PARTICIPANTS:

Ahmed Taibi Benhima, Foreign Minister of Morocco
 Badreddine Senoussi, Ambassador of Morocco

Henry A. Kissinger, Secretary of State
 Donald Easum, Assistant Secretary of State
 Harold H. Saunders, NSC Staff

DATE AND PLACE:

April 15, 1974, 3:40 p.m. - 4:15 p.m. in
 Suite 35-A, Waldorf Towers, New York

Benhima:

I want first to bring personal wishes from His Majesty on the happy occasion of your marriage. I know this will be helpful for your work. His Majesty insists that you escape for a few days with Mrs. Kissinger and spend those days in Morocco.

The reason I went to Washington this morning was to settle the visit of His Majesty to the US. Unfortunately, the date originally proposed--May 21--did not coincide with the arrival of a ship in New York. Either the ship got there too early or too late. The France is now to remain in commission and would arrive in New York on May 29.

Kissinger:

It is a fine ship. I have been on it several times.

Benhima:

The French are going to avoid selling it for prestige reasons and will keep it in commission despite the deficit.

Kissinger:

On the problem of the date for His Majesty's visit, I want to explain to you exactly what the situation is. The President is considering a visit to the Middle East and is thinking about the date for such a visit if it materializes. He would offer to stop in Morocco. We wanted to be sure first about his trip

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DECLAS - Date Impossible to Determine.
 BY AUTH - Dr. Henry A. Kissinger

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discuss the most appropriate way for handling that visit in relation to His Majesty's visit to the US. One way to do this would be for the President to stop in Rabat and then for His Majesty to pay a quick return visit soon after. But this is the only problem in arriving at a date and our only reason for hesitating. You will also appreciate that the reason we have not fixed a time for the President's trip is that we have to await a clearer picture of how the Syrian-Israeli disengagement agreement will evolve. He would also like to make his trip to the Middle East before he goes to the Soviet Union.

Benhima:

I understand. For His Majesty, arriving in the US on May 21 is out of the question. His Majesty still does not want to fly. It is difficult for him to forget two F-5s attacking his aircraft last August.

Kissinger:

We do not want His Majesty to think that any discourtesy is involved. It is just that the President does not want to go to the Middle East without stopping in Morocco. It is unlikely that he would go to the Middle East as early as May 21; it is more likely around the 28th.

Benhima:

His Majesty will take into consideration the President's travel. Would the President stop in Morocco on his way to or from the Middle East?

Kissinger:

I will recommend that he stop on the way back. He will need some calm moments. My advice will be to conclude the trip in Morocco. His Majesty has a wise perspective and can help to sum up the situation at the end of the President's visit. It is better for the President to have a summary discussion than to have his impressions of his talk with His Majesty diffused by later stops. A summary consultation would be useful. What is your advice?

Benhima:

The King attaches great value to his visit to the US. Perhaps if the President visits Morocco, a new date for His Majesty's visit could be announced then.

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Kissinger:

If the President does not go to the Middle East, of course His Majesty must come to the United States, and we would certainly want to announce a date then.

Benhima:

The problem I explained to Secretary Schlesinger this morning is that General Partain came twice to Morocco and has recommended certain force levels for Morocco.

Kissinger:

The General's view is that you need twice as much as our assistance!

Benhima:

We have no reason to expect problems between Morocco and Algeria, but it is also a permanent responsibility of the Moroccan government to preserve a military balance.

Kissinger:

There is no disagreement here in principle. The problem is that Congress is increasingly imposing restrictions on our Military Assistance programs.

Benhima:

On the financing of them or on the selling itself?

Kissinger:

Both.

Benhima:

The total cost would be \$320 million over 5 years. \$60 million of this would come from US aid.

Kissinger:

\$12 million per year?

Benhima:

Yes, over 5 years.

We are trying to make a financial effort to buy some of this equipment for cash.

Kissinger:

How did we arrive at \$12 million?

Benhima:

Congress imposes a ceiling, and then the State Department apportions what is appropriated among the African recipients. When I was with Secretary Schlesinger, I discussed with him the question of tanks. The quality of tanks we are seeking-- the M-60--is not immediately available. But there are some other possibilities.

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Kissinger:

How many tanks are we talking about? [To Saunders]
 Will you see if we can get Morocco tanks of some kind.

Benhima:

We would like something around 80 tanks as soon as possible. Secretary Schlesinger said that he would look at the situation again. Algeria has the T-64 tank. Algeria has been getting a great deal of equipment from the Soviet Union, including surface-to-air missiles.

Kissinger:

I will talk to the Pentagon. We have too many Generals. [To Saunders] Get Scowcroft to do something about this. [Joking] We will at least treat you as well as "neutrals."

Benhima:

Yes. We are good friends.

His Majesty wants you to know that he has sent an emissary to President Asad in Syria. We know that Iraq is supporting the Syrian opposition in Beirut--the left wing of the Ba'ath Party. Also, the Iraqis are pushing Habbash to move to the left of Arafat.

Kissinger:

Habbash tried to blow me up in Damascus. If I had not spent an extra hour with President Asad, I would have gone to the Mosque to a rendezvous with him.

Benhima:

It is important to President Sadat that he be able to consolidate the forces supporting the course of action he has chosen. He asked His Majesty to send someone to President Asad. President Boumediene also wants the problem to be solved.

Kissinger:

That is our impression.

Benhima:

Boumediene helped with the lifting of the embargo. The Syrians opposed it, but he argued for it.

Last night, I noted that the Israeli Ambassador in Washington said that he^{is} optimistic about prospects for disengagement. What was the basis?

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Kissinger: [Smiling] This worried you, did it?

Benhima: I would like to see what is behind it.

Kissinger: They want \$1 billion which our Congress voted and which we have been holding up. That is what is behind it.

On the question of disengagement between Israel and Syria we know two things:

--Israel must move back behind the October 6 line. They have not even agreed to go back as far as the October 6 line yet.

--Then the question is whether President Asad can be persuaded to get less than he would like. At present, he is proposing that three-fifths of the Israeli-occupied territory be returned to Syria. This is unattainable.

The major objective, as we see it is to get a first step-- to get some withdrawal. We hope that, if some withdrawal could be achieved, this would create a new situation. It is not surprising to me that the Israeli position has evolved the way it has. In October, Golda Meir literally turned her back on me at a dinner in Washington because I had proposed the idea of separation of Egyptian and Israeli forces and an Israeli pullback.

I hope the Syrians will be reasonable. But I will not even discuss the final line with them until I have an Israeli line which I feel begins to meet Syrian interests. I might at some point ask His Majesty to send an emissary to President Asad. On the whole, I am relatively optimistic.

Benhima: Khaddam [Syrian Foreign Minister] is not an easy man.

Kissinger: That is putting it mildly. He is a very difficult man. I believe Boumediene will help. President Sadat and His Majesty will help.

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Benhima: Faisal will help.

Kissinger: There is no one to press Golda Meir but me. I could use three or four others to help with that.

Benhima: The Golan fighting is part of President Asad's strategy. His purpose is to show that, if there is no agreement, the Syrian army is ready.

Kissinger: I'm not doing too much to stop him. I didn't encourage him, either.

The first Arab country I ever visited was Morocco.

Benhima: That was on your first visit to the Eastern Arab countries. Now you go directly. Now you are avoiding Morocco.

Kissinger: You can't get rid of me that easily.

[At this point, Mrs. Kissinger and Mrs. Maginnes looked into the room, and the Secretary introduced them. The Foreign Minister offered his best wishes to Mrs. Kissinger. After they left, the conversation continued.]

Benhima: You can count on His Majesty.

We are also trying to work on lifting the oil embargo against the Netherlands and Denmark. We have been working with [Algerian Foreign Minister] Bouteflika.

Kissinger: That would just leave Portugal.

Benhima: Oh, don't try that. Algeria is doing everything it can to please the Africans. For Portugal, it will take some time.

Kissinger: Our problem is that Portugal was helpful to us in the Middle East--not from any point of view that Morocco appreciates, but still I think it is better that we conduct the negotiations between Israel and the Arabs than let the USSR conduct them.

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Benhima:

I understand. But the Portuguese problem is very difficult. In Angola, it would be better for Holden Roberto to have a try than for Portugal to try to hold it.

Kissinger:

I agree.

If we can get Syria into the disengagement process, then I think some relationship with Iraq might evolve.

Benhima:

I agree. I will be going to Iraq soon.

Kissinger:

When you go to Iraq, tell the Iraqis that it is not US policy to isolate them. We are receptive to dealing with them.

I remember that, back in November, His Majesty urged me to make a gesture toward the Syrians. I did not see then how that could work. Now we have come a long distance.

In principle, we are willing to have a better relationship with Iraq.

On the question of military assistance, we will look into that in Washington.

On the question of the King's visit, let's stay loose for another two weeks. The President and the King will meet at the end of May one way or the other, either in Rabat or in Washington.

We will look into the question of a plane for His Majesty.

Benhima:

On the way back His Majesty should leave Morocco in his own plane, otherwise it looks as if he is under the control of the United States for security. If he returns to Morocco in an American plane, it would look like a courtesy. We could charter a jumbo jet for the trip over.

H.A.

Harold H. Saunders

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