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By JNARA Date 4/10/84 LITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

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**1973-12-20, Boumediene, Kissinger, Bouteflika**

MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

PARTICIPANTS:

Abdelaziz Bouteflika, Foreign Minister  
of Algeria  
Aide  
Secretary of State Henry A. Kissinger  
Assistant Secretary of State Joseph Sisco  
Peter W. Rodman, NSC Staff **PWR**  
Mme. Rose Church, Interpreter

DATE AND TIME:

Thursday, December 20, 1973  
4:30 - 5:30 p.m.

PLACE:

Library, Ambassador's Residence  
Paris

Secretary Kissinger: I wanted to tell you, also for your President, that I found my visit to Algeria extremely useful, and it is only the beginning of what I hope will be an even closer relationship. And it may come as no surprise to the Foreign Minister that the moral position of Algeria in the Arab world seemed to me, traveling through it, as extremely strong.

I thought I'd talk briefly about some of my impressions from my trip. So that we can understand each other. And if the Foreign Minister agrees, we'd like to keep your President informed of our impressions of the situation. He'll of course be informed by your Arab friends also.

I had explained our basic strategy to your President, and to you.

Our strategy is to bring about fairly rapidly some progress and some retreat of Israeli forces from their current positions. Because everyone who wants to maintain the status quo will want a complicated negotiation. This is why we have stressed that the first phase should concern disengagement of forces.

We had a long and I believe good talk with President Asad. Naturally it was the first contact at our level with Syria in twenty years, and we

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both know that the domestic situation in Syria and its relations with other countries are very complicated. So we understand why Syria decided not to join the first stage of the Conference, in the first phase. We are disappointed. But we understand. But we hope that as the conference develops Syria will see that its concerns are unjustified.

So we hope an opportunity will exist for events to develop to see whether real progress is possible.

I wanted to say this to you because I know you sympathize with the advanced spirits in the Arab world.

We have agreed with President Asad to establish a diplomatic Interests Section in Damascus for the first time in quite a while. As in Algiers. Because we haven't any diplomats in Damascus now.

I personally liked President Asad very much.

Foreign Minister Bouteflika: First, I thank you for the opportunity to see you, as I know on your journey this time you are charged with Asian as well as Middle East problems. It is clear also that the situation is becoming more and more direct in its impact on the situation in Europe.

Secretary Kissinger: Yes.

Foreign Minister Bouteflika: President Boumedienne asked me to tell you he is particularly satisfied with what you said to him and particularly satisfied with the discussions with you.

Secretary Kissinger: And if he agrees, we'd like to continue this.

Foreign Minister Bouteflika: I can confirm that he is interested in maintaining a dialogue and contact. It's a development that we consider definitively positive. There is no insurmountable difficulty between Algeria and the United States.

The situation in the Arab world now is developing in the following fashion: there are countries like Algeria, who consider that for recovery of their national territory and national Arab territory, we must link forces with each other in economic, political and military power. I think it is important that you understand our profound preoccupations. The ideal, if it were possible, would be an all-or-nothing policy. But we know

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perfectly well that the real world doesn't allow such a policy. When, as in your Asian affairs, you negotiate for four years, it is hard. But we can find a moment when the two sides might come together.

In the Middle East, it is a national question: Algeria has a national policy. Those who are for us, I thank; those who have no opinion, I thank also. Those who are against me, I will fight. All Arabs see this in the same way. The young think this way, and not only the Algerians.

We are not the Switzerland of the Arab world.

Secretary Kissinger: You are the Vatican!

Foreign Minister Bouteflika: [Laughter] No.

Secretary Kissinger: A little?

Foreign Minister Bouteflika: In the bilateral plane, we are prepared to have correct relations and relations of mutual respect with Jordan. It is clear that Hussein is the responsible person for transJordan, but only for transJordan, and not for the Jordan of 1967.

Secretary Kissinger: As I pointed out in Algeria, the Palestinian question must be part of the total situation. I'm not clear -- this is the impression I have -- whether President Assad has the same approach as the others in Algiers or whether he's interested in the Palestinian Liberation Organization. I think he had a more distant approach. Was I wrong?

Foreign Minister Bouteflika: The PLO is the sum of the organizations who are fighting for the liberation of Palestine. There are many. The principal ones are Fatah of Arafat, the PFLP of Habash, Hawatmeh and PDFLP, and Saiga of Syria. It is particularly clear that Syria favors Saiga, which is part of the Baath party. The head of Saiga is part of the Baath leadership.

The problem of the Palestinians is complicated by the fact that each country of the region favors its own group of Palestinians. Iraq has its own group.

Secretary Kissinger: Iraq too?

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Foreign Minister Bouteflika: But it's a group of marginal importance.

But it is clear that the PLO can't reach accord on all points. It represents all the tendencies in the movement. At Algiers, Habash wasn't there but his aide was. At Algiers, the whole question was discussed, for example, of attendance at the Geneva Conference. It is clear that Arafat's organization was the main one. Syria isn't afraid of it, but if the moment comes it depends on who gives instructions to the Organization. Before Assad announced that Syria wouldn't participate, you noticed that the head of Saiga made a declaration to the press in Beirut expressing reserve on the Peace Conference. Because the participation of Syria guarantees the participation of that branch, but the non-participation of Syria ensures that its role will be marginal.

I think the Arab world supports Algiers. If Egypt ceases to press for the liberation of all Arab territories, it will be an isolated Egypt.

Secretary Kissinger: You've been right in all your predictions.

Foreign Minister Bouteflika: It is the first time that Sadat has made an act of faith in the United States. It is the first time that an Egyptian head of state has committed himself without reservation this way.

Secretary Kissinger: And it's a heavy responsibility for me.

Foreign Minister Bouteflika: It has to be balanced to safeguard our national independence. Our interests, our affluence, have to be such that US policy will not pass by.

This is a great victory for President Sadat to say that Egyptian troops are east of the Canal. If disengagement brings it about that Israeli troops move east of the Canal in Sinai, it will leave a split between Syria and the Arab world. Egypt is the most important. But its heart and mind are on Syria.

Asad was in contact with us.

Secretary Kissinger: He told us.

Foreign Minister Bouteflika: He posed a question about our contacts with Washington. We came to the conclusion we couldn't close off all contact. That is to condemn the future.

In Syria, the political system is very different from Egypt. The Egyptian President has constitutional power to take, himself, major decisions. The Syrian President must work in close collaboration with his executive. He must work with the corps of the Central Committee. It is much more difficult. If when you are talking with him he reaches for the telephone to

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call his Central Committee colleagues, it is very important. But he is the most important interlocutor for you to have in Syria.

Secretary Kissinger: Mr. Sisco and I were both extremely impressed with him, and what you say doesn't surprise us. We know he has domestic difficulties, but the nature of them we don't understand, of course, as well as you do.

Foreign Minister Bouteflika: I can say simply that Asad inherited a given policy -- a policy of refusal of a ceasefire, refusal of Resolution 242, refusal of Jarring, refusal of all initiatives.

He couldn't shift overnight from black to white or white to black.

Secretary Kissinger: I understand.

Let me say we have no interest in a break in the Arab world. The only way we can get a real peace is if the Arab world is united.

Foreign Minister Bouteflika: That seems to me very important.

Secretary Kissinger: And our policy will not attempt to exploit a division between Egypt and Syria.

Foreign Minister Bouteflika: There is no division between Egypt and Syria.

Secretary Kissinger: Not now. But if there is a disengagement in Sinai, we will encourage a disengagement in Golan. I sent our Ambassador in Beirut to Assad, but I want to tell you too that we attach such importance to our relations with Algeria that we won't tell you something we won't carry out. If you want, you can tell this to President Asad also.

Foreign Minister Bouteflika: This disengagement, in your view, would be simultaneous in Golan and Sinai?

Secretary Kissinger: We are prepared for simultaneous [disengagement], but it is necessary for Syria to cooperate. It is impossible if Syria won't talk to Israel. We'll exert our influence with Israel, as we did on Israel in Kilometer 101. We can't do everything. Syria must understand this.

Foreign Minister Bouteflika: President Asad wants, before any negotiation, the scenario of the whole evacuation -- the manner, the schedule. We need

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your assurance of the fact of total withdrawal from Syrian territory, that is, Golan. You said you couldn't do it before because you hadn't been in Israel, and that you wouldn't promise what you couldn't deliver.

Secretary Kissinger: Yes, and the problem now is to begin Israeli withdrawal, and this is far easier if I can say it to Israel that I have made no undertakings on a final goal.

I think it can realize withdrawal from a great part of Golan, and in the context of the final peace, withdrawal from the rest.

Foreign Minister Bouteflika: It [Syria] is the least stable in the Arab world. It is like Latin America. It is the first time there has been a certain stability. But it is difficult; it is always possible for a general to come out of the shadows.

Secretary Kissinger: That is why we want to start with something short of a formal peace. But we want to start a negotiation because of the psychological effect in Israel. The most important decision de Gaulle made was to begin negotiations with you, because that had an impact in France.

Foreign Minister Bouteflika: That is right.

Secretary Kissinger: I understand Syrian difficulties very well. If I may, I would like to suggest that Syria not do anything irrevocable.

Foreign Minister Bouteflika: What do you mean as irrevocable?

Secretary Kissinger: Begin military operations, for example. And that way it keeps open the possibility to talk with us, and eventually Israel, on disengagement.

Foreign Minister Bouteflika: Even marginally at Geneva.

Secretary Kissinger: Even marginally at Geneva.

Let me tell you: If Syria does not give a list of prisoners to Israel, no solution of any kind is possible. Israel asks only for a list, not for an actual release at this point. This is a great concession they made to us.

Foreign Minister Bouteflika: The Syrians want to do this just as the Vietnamese did. For them it is a fundamental question. Why fundamental? Because the prisoners they have are elite pilots. Elite pilots, not ordinary troops. It is a very important card in the negotiations.

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Assistant Secretary Sisco: They don't lose the card by giving a list.

Secretary Kissinger: If there is a negotiation between Israel and Syria, they can speak with us too marginally on disengagement. One can speak of Golan.

Foreign Minister Bouteflika: The party, and Iraq behind them -- these are the two things to bear in mind when thinking of Syria.

Secretary Kissinger: When the two parties begin to speak, Israel and Egypt, they will start with absurd positions. But I can speak with the Ministers on both sides and bring about an approximation of a solution. But if there is no Israeli position at all, I as interlocutor can't do anything. It is impossible to exert pressure in the abstract. I spoke concretely with President Sadat because I had some idea of Israel's positions. This is why it is necessary that the Israelis have a role.

Another thing we can probably do is, if for example Syria gives us a list, we can be the contact between them, and in that way the Syrians can talk with us and not with Israel.

Foreign Minister Bouteflika: We can talk with them ourselves.

Secretary Kissinger: You are free to do that.

Foreign Minister Bouteflika: You can obtain the list of Syrian prisoners in Israel and give it as information you got yourself. And tell them this is a list of people you think are in Israel.

Secretary Kissinger: That is an interesting idea.

We don't have such good communications with Damascus. Can we do it through you?

Foreign Minister Bouteflika: Yes.

Secretary Kissinger: Unfortunately, I have to leave. I'm expected in Geneva.

Foreign Minister Bouteflika: I would like to make a request. What are your considerations about Palestine? Violence or no violence -- the heart of the problem is the Palestinians: the affair of Luffhansa, the affair of Rome.

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Secretary Kissinger: I understand. The affair of Rome is not decisive.

Foreign Minister Bouteflika: It is a sword of Damocles.

Secretary Kissinger: If you want to propose a contact with the Palestinians, with Sisco or someone, we are prepared to do it. To prove our good will.

Foreign Minister Bouteflika: If there is not respect, it is not possible.

I am certain I can assure you of the most complete discretion in personal relations with you and President Boumediene. There is more hope now for reaching the goal.

Secretary Kissinger: We will contact him in January on that subject.

Foreign Minister Bouteflika: I wish you bon voyage.

Secretary Kissinger: Should this be secret, or can I say we had a meeting for an hour with you to review the situation before Geneva?

Foreign Minister Bouteflika: As you wish. It is no problem for us in Algeria.

But secret diplomacy is easier for our diplomacy regarding the Palestinians and Syrians.

Secretary Kissinger: If you would like to keep it secret . . . .

Assistant Secretary Sisco: We'll take no initiative but could confirm it if we are asked.

Secretary Kissinger: We can do this: We won't announce it, but if someone asks we won't lie about it.

Foreign Minister Bouteflika: You can say we decided on it in Algiers, to meet before you went to Geneva.

Secretary Kissinger: Perhaps for that we should announce it. When we want to do it secretly, we can arrange it secretly. The worst is to attempt to be secret and have it come out.

Foreign Minister Bouteflika: We won't say where we met.

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Secretary Kissinger: Right. We'll just have Vest announce it.

I'll keep in touch with you through Eagleton. Is it possible for us to meet again?

Foreign Minister Bouteflika: Certainly.

Secretary Kissinger: But if you come to America, you are always welcome.

Foreign Minister Bouteflika: That may still be a problem.

Secretary Kissinger: I understand. But I take many trips.

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