

MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION**1973-9-20, US, Kissinger, State**PARTICIPANTS:

Henry A. Kissinger  
Ambassador William B. Buffum  
Richard Campbell

TIME & DATE:

6:50 p. m.  
Thursday - September 20, 1973

PLACE:

The White House

Ambassador Buffum: Congratulations. It's nice that the confirmation is coming right before the UN.

Mr. Kissinger: But that doesn't mean that I have a speech.

Ambassador Buffum: The last time I saw you, Mr. Secretary, was with U Thant.

Mr. Kissinger: That must have been in 1968. U Thant was not one of my great idols. [Mr. Kissinger takes phone call from Eagleburger on the UN speech.] Most of these speeches are banal and this one will be banal also.

Ambassador Buffum: On the Mid-East, at least, I hope it is.

Mr. Kissinger: I'm no dummy on this.

Ambassador Buffum: The President attracted so much attention. Verbage is very important, especially to the Arabs.

Mr. Kissinger: What could I conceivably say that wouldn't cause more harm than good?

Ambassador Buffum: You could say something traditional using a basis on 242 and that they are all sovereign states and possibly about the withdrawal from occupied territory.

Mr. Kissinger: What can we do in the Middle East?

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Ambas s no panacea.

Mr. Kissinger: I know.

Ambassador Buffum: All we can do is to keep prodding. The President's press conference was a good prod. It showed we were getting impatient. That was important. The Arabs are a little leery of us with our voting in the UN and our military assistance to Israel. With the Israeli elections coming up, we should walk carefully. Everyone knows there will be no dramatic breakthroughs. We were very close in agreement in the Four Power talks. It was on the refinement of 242. Of course, it's probably been overtaken by events as the Israelis have solidified their position.

Mr. Kissinger: I've never agreed that the Israelis would accept that position.

Ambassador Buffum: In the recent Chief of Missions Conference, Ambassador Helms told us of the expensive installations being installed in the Sinai. The new plank in the Labor Party platform is not leaving. We find ourselves in a shaky position. Additional assistance looks like it's for defensive conquered territory rather than the protection of the homeland. When the Russians were there, we had a good excuse for our military assistance program. I assume you see no settlement in the Middle East, Mr. Secretary. We should show we have made every effort to get one. Some say we should push harder.

Mr. Kissinger: My experience is you don't get a settlement. Why should the Israelis give up anything?

Ambassador Buffum: Some have given thought to the danger of going down the present path. The Arabs will have finances if Faisal gives the aid it looks like he will. The Commandos will have additional recourse to acts of desperation.

Mr. Kissinger: Against the Arabs or the Israelis?

Ambassador Buffum: Both. The Israelis' security is so tight that it can do it only with great losses as they have shown they are willing to do. They feel the Arabs think they're selling them out. Beirut on the other hand, has had to clamp down.

Mr. Kissinger: My problem is I don't know how you get from here to there.

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Ambassador Buffum: Three years.

Mr. Kissinger: We've been talking about exiling Sullivan in Lebanon. Actually, I'm just kidding about exiling him but, frankly, I think no Ambassador ever makes a big impact. Dean Brown made a difference in Jordan. Were you there then?

Ambassador Buffum: No, ..... 1970.

Mr. Kissinger: Do you have security problems?

Ambassador Buffum: Their government has been very generous with us. We have 100 men on all the time. We even have three tanks.

Mr. Kissinger: How long have you been in the Foreign Service now?

Ambassador Buffum: 25 years.

Mr. Kissinger: Do you share the feeling that the Foreign Service is demoralized?

Ambassador Buffum: I didn't sense that in Beirut but we've been pretty busy.

Mr. Kissinger: You haven't served in Washington?

Ambassador Buffum: Not recently. I did a long time ago in IL. I was the Deputy to Joe Sisco. We tended to move up together.

Mr. Kissinger: He's a man whose glands are active. Leaving that aside, what does it need?

Ambassador Buffum: I think you have done much by promising to involve them.

Mr. Kissinger: What will their morale be when I do it? I want to get the top people in the top jobs. The Director of the Foreign Service seems to be the key to all this. Do you know anyone who would make a good Director?

Ambassador Buffum: Dean Brown has courage and savvy and he worked on a Task Force on the Foreign Service. It will take courage to take on the entrenched bureaucracy.

Mr. Kissinger: I hear a lot of talk about the entrenched bureaucracy, where are they?

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Ambassador Buffum: Well, I haven't been around for a while. I certainly consider the personnel assignments system part of that but I think it runs deeper than that. I have always thought it was odd that a man of a certain grade had to have a job of a certain grade but I guess you will never get a Class 3 over a Class 2.

Mr. Kissinger: That's a good way to get rid of some people.

Ambassador Buffum: There are a good many good young officers who have gone up the ladder a little faster than the rest. You must find a way to reward them for taking risks.

Mr. Kissinger: Which job is more important, the Director of the Foreign Service or the Deputy Under Secretary for Management?

Ambassador Buffum: The latter. This man directs the basic policy decisions. These must all flow from the Secretary. One of the problems is that the personnel system is changed so often. There is very little continuity. For instance, one year they will show you your efficiency report, the next year they will not show any of it to you and I've seen others showing only part of it to you. Silly things like that creep into the system. I also think there is a changing attitude among young officers. I can see it even in my children.

Mr. Kissinger: How many children do you have?

Ambassador Buffum: Three.

Mr. Kissinger: Getting back to the Middle East, based on my experience in Vietnam, I know it is unworkable unless we have an agreement with one side. Whenever I formulated my positions, both sides sniped at me. How do we agree with the Arab side? They think that if they give us a concession it will be banked for the next round.

Ambassador Buffum: That's right.

Mr. Kissinger: Is there a way out?

Ambassador Buffum: The Israelis have to find some security without holding territory. Perhaps make Gaza a sovereign state. The Arabs never wanted Gaza and there must be a Palestinian nationality.

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Mr. Kissinger: Won't that split off Jordan?

Ambassador Buffum: Not necessarily.

Mr. Kissinger: I think the solution is with Jordan.

Ambassador Buffum: If anything is to succeed, there is no way to do it without total secrecy and I'm not sure either will do that. We must persist and we must use pressure. It would be a significant political decision to take it on. I doubt the President is willing to incur that risk.

Mr. Kissinger: Worse would be if he was willing to take the risk until he gets.....there and realizes what's happening.

Ambassador Buffum: Yes, you can really cause an uproar with any move.

Mr. Kissinger: Our problem would be controlling the media and financial pressure. If we don't get our ducks in a row before we start, I don't think it will work. In my successes I have always dealt in total secrecy and have moved very fast. That was what was wrong in 1970. Every place we..... hostages everywhere. Was that generally helpful?

Ambassador Buffum: It did no great harm, in Lebanon at least.

Mr. Kissinger: How long will you be here?

Ambassador Buffum: My plans are open.

Mr. Kissinger: Stay a few more days. I may want to talk to you again. I haven't worked on the speech. Maybe tomorrow, maybe Saturday.

[To Campbell:] Can you find out what the procedures are at the UN, how it works?]

Ambassador Buffum: I share your estimate of Waldheim. He's an intellectual lightweight.

Mr. Kissinger: His biggest problem is he has no estimate of his own limitations. (Mr. Kissinger tells story of Vietnam Conference where Waldheim was so pushy it resulted in the Chinese and the Soviets walking out on them.)