

PARTIAL TRANSCRIPT

Conversation: 771-2

Date: September 6, 1972

Time: 8:13 am – 9:48 am

Location: Oval Office

Participants: Richard M. Nixon, William P. Rogers, Henry A. Kissinger, Alexander Haig

PARTIAL TRANSCRIPT From 6:40 into recording to 16:45

Kissinger:Now, let me say a word about the Israeli situation, Mr. President, because I feel very, very strongly about it. I look at it the way we would look at it if eight Pakistanis killed eight Indians.

Nixon: I know. Unfortunately [unclear]

Kissinger: No, I know, Mr. President. But I think you have been a statesman. And I don't think we should throw it away in cheap shots. Now, and this thing could easily turn now. My great fear is, World War I started because the Austrians had been frustrated for 15 years, had the Archduke assassinated, the Germans and the whole world was outraged. And they thought that for once they would have a free shot, and they were going to settle the Serbian problem once and for all.

Nixon: The Austrians thought so?

Kissinger: I beg your pardon?

Nixon: The Austrians thought so?

Kissinger: The Austrians thought. Now, my worry is that if we say to the Israelis too much that they—

Nixon: I talked to Rabin last night. He sure hasn't talked that way.

Kissinger: Well I would really like to talk to Rabin in a formal way today when he comes back.

Nixon: The thing that I would emphasize to Rabin, I hadn't thought on this, which would be a very good test for the Israelis—I don't know whether they are able to do it or not. Mrs. Meir, and she's the only one that can do it, should call upon the International Olympic Committee to go forward with those games.

Kissinger: I agree with you.

Nixon: [Unclear] But the other reason is she can say, "Well that's what my boys would have wanted." It will make them look good rather than—you see, the trouble with the Jews is that they've always played these things in terms of outrage. You've got the Jewish Defense League raising hell and saying we ought to kill every Arab diplomat. What we have to do is enough here, that we're showing an interest. It's my thought that the best thing here is to let Rogers take the lead in the damn thing.

Kissinger: Oh, I [agree]—

Nixon: —rather than me. That's why we've got to get him in here. He's apparently done well. Mrs. Meir has said, "I've heard from Secretary Rogers." I said, "fine."

Kissinger: Well what I—

Nixon: But you see, we've got to show we care on this one because, you were in this country, well I guess you weren't—you don't really know, Henry, what the Jewish community will do on this. It's going to be the goddamnedist thing you've ever saw. Did you see both papers this morning?

Kissinger: What papers?

Nixon: Both papers.

Kissinger: Yes.

Nixon: And you're absolutely right that that can stir it all up into something very, very—so we've got to show the greatest understanding and sympathy and the rest so that they don't get into the hands of the extremists.

Kissinger: Tonight—last night, Mr. President, Haig and I have been on the phone half the night with the Israelis, who wanted us to do the opposite of what you suggested, which is the right thing. They wanted us to appeal to the International Olympic Committee to cancel it [the games].

Nixon: They're crazy. But they want to look good, don't they?

Kissinger: I talked to Rogers too.

Nixon: You see, that's exactly what the—the reason Mrs. Meir should do it. She's the only one that can. Is that what the terrorists want? They want to make it appear that they've stopped the games. It's like these assholes that tried to stop us running the government.

Kissinger: That's right.

Nixon: If we'd have stopped like some of the softheads here around [wanted] or gone over and prayed at the Lincoln Memorial, that's what they want. So the thing to do is to do it the other way. That's what I mean.

Kissinger: Well I refused to wake you up. Rogers, incidentally, agreed. So there's no problem with Rogers.

Nixon: Oh, no. [Unclear] called upon them to stop the games. That was not going to be our position.

Kissinger: I don't think we can—

Nixon: You don't think you can get Rabin in?

Kissinger: I think, in fact—well I will talk to Rabin because they don't trust Rogers but they do trust me. But I'll talk to him quietly.

Nixon: Say, "Look, this is a thought that we—we're in a position where we can't ask them to do a lot. But perhaps you should." And then they will look good.

Kissinger: They won't do that. That's out of the question.

Nixon: What's the matter with them?

Kissinger: I don't think we can even suggest it because they'd be too outraged. What we can do, though, is to keep them from blackjacking us over not having to fear. In general, I think we ought to—

Nixon: What does Rogers think we should do?

Kissinger: Well Rogers thinks we should declare a national day of mourning. I'm against even that. It's not our day of mourning, Mr. President. It's easy enough now to do a number of grandstanding—

Nixon: [Unclear] But I don't think that works.

Kissinger: And also, God I am Jewish. I've had 13 members of my family killed. So I can't be insensitive to this. But I think you have to think also of the anti-Semitic woes in this country. If we let our policy be run by the Jewish community—

Nixon: By the radical Jewish community—

Kissinger: By the radical Jewish community and declare a national—

Nixon: You understand what I was talking to Haig about last night was gestures. Let's do some things here. But nothing that would make the Germans too mad and so forth.

Kissinger: What I would favor, Mr. President, is to go to the UN—

Nixon: Me?

Kissinger: Not you. Not physically. To have the United States to go to the UN and see whether we can get some international rules on harboring guerillas and so forth. That is a concrete measure that affects the world. That's a statesmen like thing. It's not—

Nixon: Well what could you do, though, if the UN is not in session? The General Assembly?

Kissinger: Well we can get the Security Council into session. And I think the Russians might join us on that.

Nixon: The Chinese?

Kissinger: Well that'd be interesting. Then if they don't, we'll say we'll take it up with the UN.

Nixon: I want you to mention this. Did you mention this to Dobrynin?

Kissinger: Well—

Nixon: [Unclear]

Kissinger: The news hit me when I was there yesterday. And he was outraged.

Nixon: All right. How 'bout mentioning it to the Chinese.

Kissinger: Yes.

Nixon: I would now—You see I also feel that you've got to take up now on your trip to Russia, I didn't think so before, but you've got to mention this damn little thing [in] some way or other with Dobrynin.

Kissinger: All right, Mr. President.

Nixon: You see my point?

Kissinger: I will raise it.

Nixon: You see it's got to be said—everybody asks us the question, "Did we discuss this?" You've got to say "yes."

Kissinger: What I told Dobrynin yesterday, which will get us more mileage, is why don't we call Vorontsov—Dobrynin will be in Moscow next week—why don't we after I'm through with my talk, say on Wednesday, call Vorontsov into the State Department, make an official démarche.

Nixon: And have Rogers call him?

Kissinger: Have Alex Johnson call him.

Nixon: When?

Kissinger: Wednesday or Thursday.

Nixon: [Unclear]

Kissinger: Well, it escalates it. We really have to be careful with the Russians.

Nixon: Well you know Rogers, now. Let Alex do it.

Kissinger: Let Alex Johnson do it. Because if Rogers does it, they'll spread it all over the newspapers.

Nixon: Alex.

Kissinger: Alex will do it.

Nixon: Well then on our plate this morning what can we do? Now, I've called Rabin. I've asked him to call me this morning to get me a report. You know they have the best intelligence. You know he was so good last night. He said I don't have the report or anything. He says I haven't got all the information.

Kissinger: Do you mind if I talk to him and say that you're busy at this moment—

Nixon: No, no, no. That's perfectly all right. He left it open. He said I can't talk because I won't know till around 10:30. I said well let me know. Obviously he expects to call. But—

Kissinger: Because my worry is—I'm really concerned that it's easy enough now there's a lot of emotion for it, but if they take Beirut, which they could, they'll do something.

Nixon: They mustn't do that.

Kissinger: Well, I'm going to get him in today and talk to him very seriously.

Nixon: They can't start a war over this.

Kissinger: Well, I agree with you.

Nixon: You think they might?

Kissinger: I think they might. They're in the best position they've ever been in. No Russians there. We've got an election campaign. Now I got a promise out of Golda Meir 2 months ago when you asked me to that

they wouldn't take military action. But this is an enormous provocation. And they are emotional. And I don't want them to think that they've got you in their hip pocket.

Nixon: Tell them that here's a chance for them to make their points in a more effective way. Well let me say, you have no problems with Rabin. The way he's talking he's very rational.

Kissinger: Rabin is the sanest guy. But they—

Nixon: But he has others that are not.

Kissinger: They have their own election campaign coming up next spring.

Nixon: Yeah.

Kissinger: And I'm sure it is an outrage. It's a horrible—it's a horror.

Nixon: Well you don't start a war over anything like this.

Kissinger: I agree. But—no this morning the most constructive thing we could do is to go to the Security Council to see whether we could get some international rules.

Nixon: Why don't we go ask Rogers to do that?

Kissinger: Sure.

Nixon: Have him go announce it to the press.

Kissinger: That we're against countries that harbor guerillas. That is something that affects the international community.

Nixon: Did you discuss that with Rogers?

Kissinger: No. No, you can do it on your own.

[Omitted here is a discussion of Kissinger's trip to Germany]