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DEPARTMENT OF STATE

Approved in S, 6/3/68

Memorandum of Conversation

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PART I of III

DATE: May 25, 1968  
TIME: 4:00 to 5:10 p.m.  
PLACE: Secretary's Office

SUBJECT: Middle East

PARTICIPANTS: ROMANIA - Corneliu Manescu, Foreign Minister and UNGA President  
Corneliu Bogdan, Ambassador to the U.S.  
Sergiu Celac, Interpreter  
UNITED STATES - Secretary Rusk  
Walter J. Stoessel, Deputy Assistant Secretary  
for European Affairs  
George R. Kaplan, EUR/EE

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The Secretary said that he had requested this meeting in order to pursue, in precise terms, the private pre-dinner discussion on Middle East peace prospects he and Minister Manescu had had the previous evening at the Romanian Embassy. Manescu had said that certain Arab representatives were awaiting an answer from the United States as to how we proposed to promote peace in the region. In asking Manescu which countries had put the question, the Secretary said that we were in varying degrees of contact with most of them. He specified Egypt and Jordan as the ones with whom we were in closest touch; Saudi Arabia, Tunisia, Libya, Morocco and Lebanon as those with whom we had some contact; and Syria, Iraq and Algeria as the ones with whom we had little or no contact. The character of the question therefore depended on which Arab country or countries had asked it.

Manescu replied that his most recent discussion, following an earlier meeting with the Israelis, was with the Egyptians and Jordanians, both of whom knew of his Washington trip. He said that the question to the Secretary had also been coordinated with the Syrians and Iraqis.

The Secretary replied that the U.S. attitude toward the November resolution was well known. We voted for it, fully support it, and have said so in every capital where we have a representative. This includes Cairo, where our people working in the Spanish Embassy have so informed the Egyptian Foreign Minister. The real question, the Secretary said, is not whether we support the November resolution but how it is to be implemented. On specific points such as Jerusalem, our views are not in complete accord with either Israel or the Arab states.

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E.O. 12958, Sec. 3.5  
State Dept. Guidelines  
By jc, NARA, Date 3-1-01

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The Secretary continued that the primary responsibility for all concerned is to find the basis on which agreement can be found. We hope that Ambassador Jarring will now begin to set aside questions of procedure and begin to work on substance with the parties in New York. This will admittedly not be easy, inasmuch as some of the Arab nations have their own ideas of sequence and priority. These get in the way of dealing as a whole with all of the elements in the November resolution. Also, the Israelis are still pressing for direct bilateral discussions with their neighbors. We do not believe that this is necessary in order to work out a general settlement.

For our part, the Secretary said, we will support any efforts by Ambassador Jarring to engage the two sides in serious talks. We will stay in close touch with Egypt, Jordan and Israel to see if quiet background work will assist him in his efforts. Our UN Mission will be prepared to furnish more details. One should remember, however, that the Arabs were diplomats 4,000 years before the U.S. existed, and they should address themselves with utmost seriousness to the work at hand.

Manescu agreed that the Arab governments should expend maximum effort. He said that he would inform them that: (1) the U.S. reaffirms its support of the November resolution, (2) we did not feel that the signing of a treaty as such was an absolute prerequisite, and (3) the U.S. would continue its efforts in appropriate capitals to get the resolution implemented.

Manescu said that the Arabs wondered, and so did he as a Romanian official, whether we really intended to use our substantial influence to bring about Israeli acceptance of the November resolution and of whatever results Jarring might accomplish. It was equally important, Manescu said, that any such influence also be exerted on the Arabs.

Manescu agreed with the Secretary that Jarring should now be getting into substance. He said that he would speak to U Thant about this and that, although reluctant to do so on grounds that such an approach might be construed as interference or unwelcome pressure, he would also talk with Jarring.

Manescu asked the Secretary whether the U.S. is prepared to use its influence to get Israel to adopt a more reasonable stand. The Arabs, he said, had asked the same question. In doing so, they had reminded Manescu of the U.S. position of fully supporting the November resolution.

The Secretary stated that we valued Manescu's discretion as to how to handle Jarring. On the Arabs' general question on the resolution, he said that the resolution was many things to many people. The Arabs, Israelis, Soviets and U.S. all had their own interpretations of it. This is basically Jarring's problem. It is a complex matter of shading, timing and sequence.

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The question of U.S. influence is equally subject to misunderstanding, the Secretary said. Since 1945, we have faced the problem of people exaggerating what we can do in someone else's capital. Two examples--the Indian-Pakistani differences over Kashmir and the Dutch-Indonesian difficulties 20 years ago--suffice to illustrate how little actual influence we sometimes have. People always come to us and say "go tell the other capital what to do." They never ask us to tell them what to do. If Cairo or Amman think we have total influence in Israel, they are badly mistaken. We will try to use more influence in Israel than in Egypt or Jordan, but it may prove ineffective on all three. We did not have enough influence in Cairo to prevent Nasser from closing the Strait of Tiran nor were we influential enough to get a cease-fire on June 5, 1967. A cease-fire that day would have prevented conflicts between Israel and Jordan and Syria and would have averted the problem of Jerusalem. We thought we had an Israeli commitment not to initiate hostilities; the Soviets thought they had the same from some of the Arabs. We were both very wrong.

The Secretary said we would work hard for a solution. He added, however, that we can't reach one if one or two Arab governments think we can tell Israel to do what the Arabs want.

Noting that we are prepared to put history behind us and work energetically for a solution in the area, the Secretary recalled our experience in 1957 when we practically forced Israel to withdraw from Sinai on the basis that the Strait of Tiran would be free for passage. President Eisenhower did this in Egypt's behalf, and Nasser kicked us in the teeth a year ago.

Manescu said that, in a diplomatic sense, we are at a final and a starting point. The real problem is to begin implementing the November resolution and, in discussions with the Arabs, he would approach this in the same constructive manner the Secretary had used. Manescu pledged that Romania, which is in a special position with regard to both sides because of the position it has taken toward Israel, would give full assistance to Jarring's efforts to implement the resolution. At the same time, Manescu said, the Arabs have been saying that it is Israel which is unwilling to accept the resolution. They claim that no part of the problem is not susceptible of solution and that Israeli obstructionism is the real barrier.

The Secretary noted that an overall solution, which Jarring must now seek, has many parts. It is difficult to go to one part without having to become involved in others. For example, the Arabs feel that Israeli withdrawal is the most important problem, but the Israelis say that withdrawal means recognition. With recognition come such sovereign rights as passage through Suez. Nasser, on the other hand, says that a Suez solution depends on a solution of the problem of refugees. We hope that Jarring can find a way through these spiderwebs. Looking ahead, the Secretary said that in the final analysis the two roughest problems would be Suez and Jerusalem.

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Manescu said that, while Jarring possessed certain professional diplomatic qualities, he appeared reluctant to do anything that might jeopardize his contacts. Manescu predicted that Jarring would tell him that he needs a real mandate in order to act more vigorously. Jarring would add that he had this from the Arabs but not from the Israelis.

The Secretary replied that this was in fact almost more technical than substantive and that it would be unfortunate if the exercise degenerated into a debate over the meaning of the Jarring formula. Citing the Palais Rose agenda discussions of 15-16 years ago and the lack of agreement on an agenda in Paris right now, he said that Jarring should dig in on substance with all parties and see what can be done.

Manescu said that the Jarring formula had been agreed to by both sides and that there had been considerable optimism two weeks earlier. In fact, everyone in New York had been waiting for the Foreign Ministers to arrive. Then the agreement collapsed. The reason, Manescu said, was that Israel had in effect renounced its acceptance of the formula.

Manescu asked the Secretary how he felt in these circumstances about the present problem of getting discussions going in implementing the November resolution on the basis of the Jarring formula.

The Secretary replied that he could not speak for Israel or the Arab countries.

Manescu stated that Jarring simply does not know what to do.

The Secretary said that Jarring should take account of the fact that he is himself an important political force in the area. If he moves reasonably and strongly, parties who ignore him would pay the price of doing so. The Secretary asked if Jarring was now in contact with the parties.

Manescu said that he had asked Kuznetsov about this and Kuznetsov had replied that Jarring did not know what to do. Manescu said that something is clearly wrong. The Arabs, he said, want to know why Israel is unwilling to discuss implementing the Jarring formula. Manescu asked what the U.S. proposed to do.

The Secretary said that we may be in touch with Manescu through our U.N. Mission. He said that our impression at present is that all sides are about equidistant from what Jarring had hoped to achieve in terms of the Rhodes discussion. We are sympathetic with Jarring's dilemma, as these are the most stubborn problems in the world and there is an absence of long-range wisdom on both sides.

Manescu reiterated that the U.S. should do something to facilitate the beginning of discussions under Jarring's auspices.

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The Secretary said we did not disagree with that but that the circumstances were most complicated.

Manescu asked if the U.S. had any views about Jarring reopening the idea of a new formula with the parties.

The Secretary said we had no objections and suggested that Jarring talk substance with appropriate representatives in New York.

Manescu replied that Jarring was scared. He fears long, tedious discussions in which the parties shift ground. He prefers to get written views from the parties. Jarring's fingers have been burned once too often. This may explain his emphasis on procedure. Manescu said that positive action needs to be taken; otherwise, the whole issue will drift, and this is dangerous.

The Secretary noted that Romania enjoys the confidence of both sides and that Manescu enjoys personal prestige. Our delegations in New York should stay in touch. It is extremely difficult to get anything out of Jarring. We respect his wish to be discreet. As a result, we do not know what he is thinking.

Manescu said that in his one meeting with Jarring he had told him that he would have to start talking at some point. Jarring's reaction was the only human touch he displayed in the meeting. (Manescu did not characterize the nature of the reaction).

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