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By WDP NARA Date 12/18/00

MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

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External

President
from - Kissinger

11/2/73

MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

PARTICIPANTS:

Golda Meir, Prime Minister of Israel
Simcha Dinitz, Ambassador to the U.S.
Mordechai Gazit, Director of the Prime
Minister's Office
General Aharon Yariv, Assistant to the
Prime Minister
Mordechai Shalev, Minister
General Yisrael Leor, Adviser to the
Prime Minister

Dr. Henry A. Kissinger, Secretary of State
Joseph Sisco, Assistant Secretary for
Near Eastern and South Asian Affairs
Peter W. Rodman, NSC Staff

DATE AND TIME:

Friday, November 2, 1973
10:00 p.m. - 12:45 a.m.

PLACE:

The Blair House
Washington

[The Secretary and Prime Minister conferred alone from 10:00
- 11:05. At 11:05, the rest of the group was admitted.]

Meir: Aharon, tell us what will happen when we say the road is open to
non-military material to the Third Army.

Yariv: If we have no control over it, this road will be used to reinforce
the Third Army.

Kissinger: With what?

Yariv: Sooner or later, in the darkness hours, anti-aircraft missiles in
the Third Army area.

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Kissinger: Through UN checkpoints.

Yariv: I think UN checkpoints are not reliable. This is our experience. Maybe not in the first days, but over a period. Because, Mr. Secretary, the present configuration presents them with two problems -- first is sustenance and second is our presence near Cairo. In a phase in time when one wants to proceed to a negotiating phase, the configuration of strength is very important. We are in a good bargaining position because we're in a good military position. If we have to withdraw, our whole position is weakened, to a grave degree, and a big risk. Our experience with the UN is very bad.

Kissinger: That may be true, but one has to look at the alternative. We have kept the UN Security Council off your back by saying we're talking to the Egyptians, and we've told the Egyptians any proposal that comes to us through the Russians is dead. So we have kept pressure off by making them think we will do something. All this mirage will disappear if I go to Cairo and produce nothing. This will produce extreme activity in the Security Council and an unconditional resolution to go back to the October 22 lines, without the prisoners or anything.

That's only a Security Council resolution. But other things will happen. There is the oil pressure. Someone will say, slow down the arms. And we can't be in the position of breaking an agreement with the Russians. No one told us you needed Suez to have a tolerable ceasefire. We made an agreement in good faith with the Russians. It doesn't make any difference who shot first. You'll be forced off the road without anything.

Yariv: I promised the Egyptian general answers to two questions -- answer to the first phase of his general arrangement.

Kissinger: You have to tell me what your answer will be.

Yariv: He drew his map, he showed me two beachheads, with the UNEF in between. The size of the forces could be discussed, he said. Second issue was the conditions of life for the Third Army.

I said we would not have the answers before Monday. He said all right. He said the question of prisoners was separate.

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Meir: I told the Secretary about the breakdown of the agreement on prisoners.

Yariv: Prisoners will be discussed when she gets back.

Kissinger: There are two problems. They will certainly discuss the disengagement phase with me in Cairo. I've no views on this; I was going to hold forth in an abstract way.

It is absolutely imperative for me to know before I am in Cairo what you'll tell them.

Yariv: We've no problem with that.

Kissinger: But I have to know.

Meir: I only had a brief word with Allon and Dayan on the runway in Lod. To me it's an absolutely impossible suggestion. As a result of this war we should pull back thirty kilometers and let them have both sides of Suez, with the UN in between. And that's not even the end. It's only the first phase.

Dinitz: This is what was presented to you.

Yariv: Yes.

Meir: The Cabinet won't accept it.

Kissinger: That's not desirable, certainly. I don't think you'll agree to it. But the UN being in between has certain advantages.

Meir: During the discussions for a peace settlement, if they are separated ten kilometers, each side, then there is real hope for peace talks.

Kissinger: There is no chance whatsoever of its being accepted.

Meir: Why?

Kissinger: Sadat can't make a settlement in which he not only gets nothing on the East Bank but gives up ten kilometers on the West Bank. He'll be overthrown.

We have a letter from the Shah pleading with us not to go to this. He's not your enemy, and this is what he thinks it means.

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Meir: I don't understand.

Kissinger: The Shah wrote, using the excuse of arguing with our October 8 proposal of a return to the status quo ante. He said don't do it.

Meir: Suppose they move back, and then there is a buffer zone.

Kissinger: They will probably not accept.

Let me say this: If you and we develop a degree of confidence in each other, we can agree on a position in advance. And you can take an outrageous position, and let us force you off it. Then we have a strategy. What I have convinced Egypt of in this war is that the Russians can give them arms but only we can give them territory. The only question is how much, in what time frame. That can take six weeks.

My advice to you is to be tough with them. But the best strategy is one where, however painful it is, only we can produce something.

But we're not in that stage yet. My advice to you is, don't get into a disengagement discussion yet on Monday. That's not the official U.S. Government position, just personal advice.

But the present necessity is the October 22 problem, which if properly played, can be used to get an easing of the oil embargo, an easing of pressures from Europeans, and some illusions in the Arab world. This will ease pressures on you.

Yariv: Embargo? Bab El-Mandeb?

Kissinger: No, the oil pressure. If we can get Sadat to agree, even if only for two months, it gets us through the worst winter months.

This gets us through with the Russians, where now he [Brezhnev] is writing a letter a week to the President saying he's been tricked -- which is not unreasonable -- and now they are trying to bypass me by sending Hot Line messages. They don't know I get those too. They make a proposal every other day to send helicopters in to save the Third Army. It is impossible to send American planes to fight Russian planes on that issue. You run the risk of getting forced off the roads for nothing.

Therefore, I would like to try to get your agreement on a package deal while Egyptians are still under the illusion we are the solution to all

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their dilemmas. Sooner or later they'll turn on us anyway. But what we need now is time.

Yariv: How do we get time?

Kissinger: You agree in principle to return to the October 22 line. The line is to be demarcated between you and Egypt. While the discussion goes on, the road is open to non-military traffic checked by the UN with you standing there. With an understanding that even if the road changes hands, only non - military supply can go through. And there will be an exchange of prisoners and a lifting of the blockade. I have no reason to think they'll accept the lifting of the blockade.

The weak spot in this is that Egypt will insist that the exchange of prisoners can occur only when you return to the line. You'll insist the exchange take place when the road is open on a permanent basis. This is the dilemma.

Meir: I want to ask something which may seem very naive. If they want the road only for supplying of the Third Army, they can have it. We don't care how many cigarettes and biscuits they send in.

Kissinger: They'll say -- just as you don't trust the UN, they'll say they don't trust you.

Meir: We can give it as an undertaking to you, in writing, or anything.

Kissinger: The problem is, to handle Egyptian Foreign Minister. If you think it's easy to drag it for five days discussing nothing, on a very simple problem. This is going on now a week. The minute this negotiation fails, the Russians will go in to the Egyptians and say, "You idiots, now let us take over." They'll go to the UN; there will be oil pressure; there will be UN resolutions to put the UN on the road, and our bureaucratic pressures. I told you we had serious proposals for us to supply the Third Army.

You can't solve October 22 problem by supplying the Third Army.

Meir: Do they want the October 22 line for supplies or to break the encirclement? This is the problem. If it's that, it means they'll encircle our army.

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Kissinger: If they can get enough through the UN checkpoints.

Meir: The tanks are already there.

Kissinger: How far from the roads would you be?

Yariv: He showed me his map. He wants all three roads.

Kissinger: That is insane.

Yariv: Let's suppose it's their maximum. But today we're not holding a road; we're holding a line. We control the whole territory. He's smart. He makes a distinction between supplies and holding a strategic position.

He has the technique of taking me aside to talk frankly. I told him he wouldn't get the October 22 lines because it would put us in an inferior strategic position. He came back the other day and said he wanted "political-level" discussions. Next day he said he was appointed a political advisor!

I told him no October 22 lines. He said, "O.K. I have a plan." So he left October 22 lines. [He opens up a map to show the lines.] Sadat, you remember, said in a speech, "We'll leave you a bridgehead of 400 square kilometers." It sounds great, but it gives them the three roads.

Kissinger: Where were you really at 1852 hours October 22?

Yariv: We cut the two main roads.

Kissinger: On October 22?

Yariv: Yes.

Kissinger: The only one you got afterwards is this one [Adabiyah]?

Yariv: Yes.

During the night he'll infiltrate along this road and build up his force there. He'll insist that the line be drawn in such a way that he can infiltrate.

There is a difference between the road and the line. If we control the line, we control the territory. Otherwise he'll be independent of the road.

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It is important for us to move to negotiations when we're in the position of strength. What happens here affects what he's achieved, even with the fact that this army is trapped.

Kissinger: The dilemma I have is this. If you look at history, Prussia started as Israel did and just expanded and filled the territory it expanded into. But there was no UN. There is no question that this is a correct Israeli strategy -- if this was a local problem and if you were alone.

One thing the Arabs have achieved in this war -- regardless of what they lost -- is that they've globalized the problem. They have created the conviction that something must be done, which we've arrested only by my prestige, by my trip, by maneuvers. This will all run out in a few weeks. The Soviets are anxious to get back in. I don't think you're being unreasonable. But what we can get is something less negative than what you have now.

Your worse danger is not being trapped by the Third Army; it is massive pressure to go back to the 1967 borders.

Dinitz: The problem, Dr. Kissinger, becomes clearer if you realize the Third Army isn't in passive state but is planning every day to break out. They are arming themselves and preparing.

Kissinger: This may be true. . . But I've left the Arab world and am sitting in China and Sadat makes a speech saying, "The Americans have tricked us." The Russians came into the UN with a resolution to go back to the October 22 line. They'll play that scenario with the helicopters.

We have a period of quiet now by playing this fakery of talking to Fahmi for an hour every day.

Meir: If we're forced into this now, why won't we be forced into anything?

Kissinger: No. We're in a peculiar situation. If you had taken Suez on October 21, we wouldn't be here talking about this.

Meir: Where is the October 22 line?

Kissinger: If it weren't for your prisoners, we could have a great strategy, throwing it into the negotiations.

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Dinitz: Why not put the prisoners in with the supplies?

Kissinger: Because you have no right to be on that line. Our only concern about the Third Army is that from Brezhnev's point of view the agreement on ceasefire with a fixed deadline, plus my trip to Tel Aviv, plus your moving afterward -- makes him look like a fool. That's our dilemma. They assume collusion.

Dinitz: That's why we allow supplies, to get you out of the dilemma.

Kissinger: The Soviet motivation is not based on a sentimental attachment to their word with us. They'll see an opportunity to get back in. Their political position in Egypt is not that good, because they only saved Egypt from disasters and didn't give them anything positive. My strategy is to be in the position to make them think they can get some progress from us. This helps us keep the Russians out of power plays and to resist them when they do make power plays. If I can give the Egyptians something in Cairo that permits the evolution of the strategy I indicated, we could keep this process going for a while. It may break down at some point, but at that point we may have split the pressures into their component parts. I've kept the oil companies quiet, the Russians quiet, NATO quiet, so far.

I told the Prime Minister we just got 35 Russian "observers" out.

Yariv: You touched on a very sensitive point, the prisoners. Let us assume for a minute that discussion is going on on the October 22 line; in the meantime they don't give in on the prisoners or blockade because they see this as their leverage on us for the October 22 lines. It is an impossible position.

Kissinger: But otherwise you'll be immediately in an impossible position.

Dinitz: What would satisfy the Egyptians?

Kissinger: I don't know.

Meir: If you had known of the blockade when you were in Moscow, you would have raised it.

Kissinger: No question.

Meir: We could go to the Security Council on that.

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Dinitz: With grrat success, Madame Prime Minister.

Kissinger: What would they take? Agreement in principle to the October 22 lines, non-military convoys on the roads, an exchange of prisoners, lifting the blockade. That, I think, is negotiable. The one soft spot is when does the prisoner exchange take place? You obviously want the prisoners now.

Meir: Yes.

Kissinger: What can the U.S. promise them that would make them give them up? Once we get agreement on that, we're in a different position.

I frankly think you misassessed the geopolitical situation. You were correct in the local situation.

What can we promise them? Goodwill in the subsequent situation? Maybe they'll agree to that. I don't know. Joe, can you think of anything?

Sisco: It is hard to get anything concrete.

Kissinger: I am deathly afraid of getting into a concrete peace plan. I like the buffer idea, but I would rather not discuss this with you.

The negotiations won't begin before December 1. It will be many weeks before we have to confront any concrete proposal. The Russians can't threaten to send forces if in the first month you don't agree on disengagement zones.

Gazit: Could you promise dates and procedures for a negotiation?

Kissinger: I'll tell you, ever since we faced them down, they're biding their time. Something eerie is going on there. Their forces are increasing; there are over one hundred ships now in the Mediterranean. In Czechoslovakia there were many false alarms. Now they are publishing articles on Watergate for the first time.

Meir: Really:

Sisco: They are even mentioning impeachment.

Kissinger: If I knew what the ceasefire line would look like, I wouldn't have been in Peking from the 10th to the 13th. I look upon the 10th to the 13th

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Yariv: Yes, if we hold the line.

Kissinger: Because however sloppy UN control is, they can't move tanks. The package I'm suggesting is satisfactory to you if I can get the prisoners. You'd run the risk of screwing up the negotiations.

What do I say if they say they accept every detail of this -- except the prisoners?

Yariv: Except the prisoners?

Kissinger: Maybe if I say you'll get off the road completely. Just to give them something face-saving.

You've now convinced me the line is more important than the road.

Yariv: The SA-6 missile is like a tank.

Kissinger: I now understand what your requirements are. We've now gone intellectually as far as we can go. Can you give up the Straits if you got prisoners?

Meir: What that means is that we'll be left without oil. This is what we've built very carefully with Iranians.

Kissinger: You may be left without oil anyway. I'm trying to think of something we could sacrifice, or something the U.S. could promise them. Let's think about it overnight. Joe and I will think of what we can offer; you think of what you can give up.

Maybe they'll accept right away. Then there will be no problem.

Yariv: Then it would be a pleasant surprise.

Kissinger: If we can tell him it's a UN road, then it's a victory of sorts. And you don't mind if you can stay ten miles away.

Dinitz: Only UN inspection?

Kissinger: I know what you want; I will be glad to let you conduct the negotiations. But they can't get anything through like tanks, artillery -- anything they can't get in a two-ton truck.

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with great trepidation. I don't get the same communication from Dobrynin that I used to get. It is more official now. I get the feeling they're writing a ledger of things we've refused, as if to justify something. I told you they proposed special representatives. That we turned off by agreeing to upgrade our Interests Section in Cairo after my visit. We're both playing our own games.

Sisco: If we can't find practical arrangement as the Secretary described, we face a complicated situation.

Kissinger: Let us look at a balance sheet of our assets: One is your military situation. Second is the Arab belief that they've been stupid to be nasty to the United States. Third is a sentimental belief that because I settled three or four other things I can settle this. They tell each other these things. That can be used with the Europeans, who are cowards. Otherwise, everything will concentrate on forcing you off the road. That you can avoid for a month by avoiding Security Council resolutions. But it will influence every bureaucratic decision in this town. By the end of December we'll certainly be joining in a UN resolution.

I won't mislead you. Even if you go along, you will be under pressure. You and we once worked out a strategy which was relatively painless. Now we have to work out one with a minimum of pain.

Dinitz: What has changed in the three days since you said continuous non-military supply could get the prisoners?

Kissinger: I thought continuous non-military supply linked to the October 22 lines gave you enough to take care of your problem.

Meir: To leave our prisoners there for a certain length of time, that we can't live with.

Kissinger: First, I misunderstood the geography of the situation. I thought the military problem was just one road.

Sisco: Can you conceive of some hypothetical movement of your forces off the roads within a practical arrangement as the Secretary described which could approximate what the other side might think of as the October 22 line, but would not be a problem for your forces?

Kissinger: That wouldn't help. They'd claim another line. You can live with UN control of the road, if you hold both sides of the road.

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Gazit: Is there any chance you could leave that capital with an announcement, in addition to the other things, that the negotiations in third paragraph of 338 will begin December 15?

Kissinger: They think that's a concession to you.

Gazit: With an announcement that the prisoners will be exchanged on that date.

Kissinger: It would be a great announcement. I have a good judgment of what is attainable in a negotiation. If you can be obnoxious on Monday....

Meir: We have to remember. We've been away from home only two days. We can't allow convoys through without our prisoners. We have our pilots there. We're one family.

They don't care about their prisoners. Why are only 60 trucks unloaded?

Kissinger: Because they want to show that the convoy system is inefficient. Part of scheme is an excuse to bring Russian helicopters to supply them.

The Russians are unnaturally quiet. We're in the eye of a storm which we've engineered around my trip -- which will break within a week. I have the impression they're writing it all down. They don't forgive a humiliation. Dobrynin usually calls five times a day for an answer; now he doesn't. We owe him answers to a Brezhnev letter and to their proposal for representatives. I have the impression he'd rather not have an answer.

I don't know what they're doing -- military moves or what. There are rumors of a Russian armored brigade in Syria. We're flying photography tomorrow to check it.

We should meet tomorrow maybe for a half hour. If they don't accept, we need to know a fall back position.

Meir: I want to come back to the embargo on the Straits. To us it is a calamity. An enormous investment, and our relationship in Iran.

Kissinger: Madame Prime Minister, if I leave Cairo with nothing, you'll have UN resolutions and an embargo too. We need an attainable alternative. That it will be in my opening position is a certainty.

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The difficulty arises, when defacto you don't want to go back to the October 22 line, whether we can construct something that gets you your prisoners and eases the oil pressure. The question is what we can throw into the pot.

Meir: You don't want to discuss separation of forces?

Kissinger: I don't want to get into a discussion of that. He'll want to discuss it. They won't under any circumstances accept your proposal. I want to listen to him.

Sisco: The question of disengagement at best would be the first phase of the so-called negotiations.

Kissinger: Yes.

Sisco: That would be quite a beginning.

Kissinger: I'm willing to discuss disengagement in Cairo, but in a sufficiently professorial way in which they can't figure out what I'm saying. I don't want to get into an argument of where your forces are and their forces are. The strategy is to disagree with you and then get you to move to a pre-agreed position.

Dinitz: We've been doing that!

Kissinger: The tactics are great but strategy isn't your forte.

Yariv: Talk to them about disengagement and use this to get the prisoners.

Kissinger: What they need from me is some success that Sadat can point to that he can't get from you. In this sense our interests are parallel. Otherwise, the Russians are after us, and the Europeans and everyone will blame our support for you for their cold winter. And on an issue on which you are clearly in the wrong -- as far as the world is concerned. They don't give a damn about that line.

I want the option of disengagement, but I want to keep vaguely in Sadat's mind that I might give him something later on disengagement, but not get into precise schemes. He might even think he'll get his proposal if I stay away from specifics. I can tell him "we can discuss disengagement later, but let's do this now."

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Meir: What is the Syrian proposal?

Kissinger: The Syrian proposal is that you permit the 15,000 civilians to return and give them their dead bodies, and they'll give back the prisoners. If you agree to demarcate the October 22 line and return to it, then there will be an exchange of prisoners. They said there are two positions on Mt. Hermon that you took. Then, they say, they'll exchange prisoners.

On the Syrian front, there were really no international pressures at all. I don't give a damn what you do.

Yariv: There they have no case on October 22. They didn't accept the ceasefire.

Kissinger: On Syria, we are pure intermediaries. It is not an international problem.

Meir: What can we do to press them on prisoners? They will kill them.

Kissinger: Well, he said let their 15,000 return.

Meir: 15,000?

Gazit: 1,500?

Kissinger: Maybe he misspoke. It is some protection for you if you get a list.

Meir: At least that.

Kissinger: They say they'll do that.

Meir: We agree to let the Red Cross get in that area to look at the civilians, if we get our prisoners. Or a list of prisoners, because the people there are really in danger of their lives.

Dinitz: It is interesting that the Russians are less interested in Syria than in Egypt.

Kissinger: If it were a normal ceasefire no one would care if you pushed forward. The misfortune is that the armies are behind each other.

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I couldn't care less about the morality of the October 22 lines. I care about the reality of getting something started. Because you'll get under enormous pressure from the rest of the world.

The Syrians told us if you let these people back, and return the bodies, you'll get a list. If you want, we can tell them this. This was unconditional.

Sisco: What they weren't sure of without checking was giving you the prisoners if you give up the second position on Mt. Hermon.

Kissinger: He said 15,000. It must be a figure that's determinable by records.

Yariv: It's more than 1,500.

Kissinger: We'll be in touch with you tomorrow morning. That figure I would need only if you want me to tell Syrians anything. I am not recommending for or against it.

Think about the other problem, which is our nightmare: Russian helicopters going in there, and an enormous crisis which then forces you back anyway.

Yariv: There is a Russian saying that, "morning is wiser than evening."

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