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DEPARTMENT OF STATE

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Memorandum of Conversation

DATE: December 7, 1973

SUBJECT: Meeting between Secretary Kissinger and Egyptian Ambassador

PARTICIPANTS: Secretary Kissinger
Assistant Secretary Joseph Sisco
Michael Sterner (NEA/EGY)

Egyptian Ambassador, Ashraf Ghorbal
Minister Ahmed Tawfik Khalil, Egyptian Interests Section

Secretary Kissinger: It's nice to see you again and I extend a very warm welcome to you here. I seem to be spending most of my time seeing Middle Easterners these days: Yamani, Dayan, yourself. In addition, a lot of private people want to come in and give me advice.

Ambassador Ghorbal: It seems to me you already know the Middle East backwards and forwards.

Secretary Kissinger: I'm certainly learning.

I've kept my promise to President Sadat and have been working hard to organize ourselves internally to withstand the inevitable attacks when they come against our Middle East policy. I spend half my time on the Middle East with Congressional leaders and key newsmen and I believe we are making progress. Once the peace conference opens, we're going to see some substantial progress. That is, if the peace conference opens. We seem presently hung up on a debate over minor procedural matters.

Ambassador Ghorbal: Our initial impression is that Ambassador Eilts was an extremely good choice.

Secretary Kissinger: We only want to give you our best.

Ambassador Ghorbal: He is already doing an excellent job.

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Secretary Kissinger: We still have some communications problems. What I can't figure out is when Hafez Ismail writes to me, and I reply, Foreign Minister Fahmi gets upset. I'll be happy to deal with the Foreign Minister exclusively if that's what the President wants. Can you give me any guidance about this?

Ambassador Ghorbal: As you said in your recent press conference, Mr. Secretary, it's "institutionalizing schizophrenia." Seriously, Fahmi and Ismail get on pretty well, and this really shouldn't be too much of a problem. There will be an opportunity for you to discuss this question with the President in Cairo.

Secretary Kissinger: Our latest exchange on the text of the letter to the SYG is still hung up on some minor points of wording. There was a question of how you dealt with the reference to Palestinian participation, and also we don't want a formal Security Council meeting to consider the holding of the conference. We think a consultation procedure by the President of the Council is sufficient.

Ambassador Ghorbal: Would that really be as good as having formal Security Council endorsement?

Secretary Kissinger: I think so. We don't much like the idea of giving the opportunity of all 15 of these people making speeches.

Ambassador Ghorbal: On previous occasions I don't think the speech making has done any particular harm.

In any case, Mr. Secretary, I wanted to convey a message to you on behalf of President Sadat. Following his meeting with Ambassador Eilts, I found the President quite disturbed because of Israel's intransigence and the feeling that the United States was not putting sufficient weight behind the implementation of paragraph b of the six-point agreement. Ambassador Eilts had raised the factor of Israeli elections and President Sadat had answered that he too had serious political problems that had to be taken into account. The President had even mentioned that the Soviets had been upset about the recently enhanced U.S.-Egyptian relations.

By consequence Sadat feels that the genuine building of confidence which took place between you and him during your

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Cairo visit has been jeopardized by Israeli tactics. This indeed has always been Israel's objective--to poison incipient improvements in U.S.-Arab relations. Equally, Sadat feels that it was your idea to subscribe to the particular formulation on disengagement that became the second paragraph of the six-point agreement; he bought it upon your recommendation, but now he sees that it is not being followed through with any real determination. In the meantime, the situation on the ground continues to be very tense.

In brief, we feel we owe it to you, Mr. Secretary, to say that you must attend to the erosion of your credibility that has taken place since your visit last month. Sadat made tremendous concessions in agreeing to a POW exchange and also in lifting the Bab al-Mandeb blockade. Sadat was not afraid to make these concessions any more than he was afraid to take the risk of war, but he has nevertheless had to pay a certain price to make them politically.

The President now thinks that what is needed is an initial stage of disengagement prior to the convening of the peace conference because it is believed that this would greatly help the atmosphere of the peace conference itself.

Secretary Kissinger: I appreciate your candor, and the President's candor in making these remarks. You have dealt with me for many years and you know that I have always been equally candid with you as to what was possible and what was not possible. You have been treated to many expressions of intention by well-meaning U.S. officials previously, but they have generally not produced results. I explained to President Sadat that I needed time to prepare public opinion in this country for what has to be done. I have been working hard at this ever since. I think I have been making some progress. We have begun to split off the moderates even among the Jewish community and, we are building support for a substantial disengagement agreement along the lines of Hafez Ismail's recent communication. I told President Sadat last month that this was where we were headed; that remains our decision, and he can count on it. We have, moreover, worked hard on Israel at the same time. Some sign of this is apparent in the kind of proposals that Yariv was putting forward in the kilometer 101 talks. He had to pull back in the last meeting because of internal Israeli political problems, but the peace conference could take up where those talks left off.

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What might look like a slow procedure to President Sadat is actually the quickest way to get results. If we have an explosion of public opinion in this country against what President Nixon and I are trying to do, everything is down the drain. I can assure President Sadat that within a measurable period of time--and I will discuss what I mean by this more precisely when I see the President in Cairo--we will achieve a disengagement agreement that will make the whole question of the October 22 lines irrelevant.

Ambassador Ghorbal: I will faithfully report what you have said. Is it possible that some kind of symbolic withdrawal might take place before the convening of the peace conference?

Secretary Kissinger: I'm racking my brain as to whether something like this is possible. I may have something to talk about when I get to Cairo, but I don't want to leave the impression I'm making any promises.

In my meetings with Hafez Ismail last February and last June I told him what I thought was possible and what in my opinion was not possible. Believe me, I know what is on his mind. I am asking for only a few more weeks, and I assure you that the time is not being wasted.

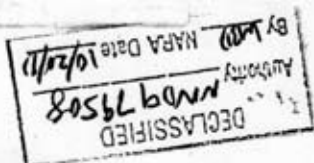
Ambassador Ghorbal: What is happening about your military assistance to Israel?

Secretary Kissinger: Nothing really unusual. Regular supplies are continuing. The air lift has stopped entirely.

Ambassador Ghorbal: But deliveries are continuing by sea, are they not?

Secretary Kissinger: Yes, but it is our impression that we are delivering less than what is going into the Arab countries. In any case this is no longer the issue. The Israelis now know how dependent they are on the U.S. and that means they are going to listen to us.

Ambassador Ghorbal: I am sure they will, but still, I am left with the conviction that actions speak louder than words.



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Secretary Kissinger: Undoubtedly true, but the proposition in any case will be tested, and we will see.

Ambassador Ghorbal: Is there anything you can tell me about General Dayan's visit?

Secretary Kissinger: Dayan had two main problems. The first is the direct obverse of your problem: he feels we are not giving enough military equipment to Israel. Secondly, we spent a lot of time talking about what needs to be done in connection with a peace settlement.

You can tell President Sadat that we attach the greatest importance to our relations with him, that we think he has taken a courageous step in agreeing to the six-point agreement, that we know the future course of our relations depends on achieving solid progress on a peace settlement, and that we are confident of the outcome.

Ambassador Ghorbal: Can you give me any recommendations about people I might call on in the near future?

Secretary Kissinger: I think you ought to see Fulbright, Mansfield, and Scott, and I think you should also pay a call on the Vice President. I'll arrange a meeting for you with the Vice President. On the House side, you should call on Speaker Albert, and also on the minority leader--isn't that O'Neill? Try to present your case as moderately as you can. But I don't need to tell you that: you're an old hand on the Washington political scene.

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