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By SOM NARA DWS 8/11/00

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MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

PARTICIPANTS:

Egyptian side:

President Sadat
Foreign Minister Fahmy
General Gamasy (part of meeting)

US side:

Secretary Kissinger
Under Secretary Sisco
Ambassador Eilts

SUBJECT:

Meeting with President Sadat,
March 12, 1975

PLACE:

Aswan, Egypt

After the Secretary had briefed the President on the status of Turkish-Greek negotiations and on his talks in Syria, he reported the results of his talks in Israel as follows:

The Secretary had worked on Israel in the manner which he had previously described to the President. A frontal confrontation had been avoided since this would have split the Jewish community in the US. Instead, an effort had been made to create a body of support for the desirability of some movement forward. We had also worked on individual Israeli leaders and as a group. All of this takes time. During the Secretary's February trip, the dominant mood in Israel and in the US public media was to go to Geneva and have a stalemate. This has been changed.

The Israelis, the Secretary continued, have never made a decision on any offer other than that which Ambassador Eilts presented in December and which the President rejected. The Secretary has been dealing with an Israeli negotiating team consisting of Rabin, Allon, Peres and General Gur. The team has no authority from the Cabinet to go beyond what has already been authorized. The President's paper has been shown only to Rabin and Allon. No one in Israel has yet had to make a decision on the oilfields and the passes.

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At the present time, the Secretary opined, Rabin and Allon are probably prepared to go along with such a decision. Gur, in his judgment, will probably not make a public uproar about such a decision. Peres, however, is still maneuvering. Rabin's problem is to keep such speculation out of the press. He has kept his Cabinet in the dark. He wants to move slowly. The Secretary returns to Jerusalem on Friday. Thereafter, on Sunday, Rabin will want to propose some of the geographic limits to the Cabinet after which we can work out details. The Secretary believes a situation has been created in which Rabin and Allon will push for an agreement. They appear to understand the need for a different attitude toward Sadat. On the other hand, they need the maximum obtainable quid pro quos in order to carry the Cabinet. The Secretary knows what they want; the President will have to tell him what he can do. Some things can be handled in the context of the paper already given us. The Israelis need a record of having raised all the Cabinet's instructions.

Digressing for a moment, the Secretary alluded to the Egyptian interest in sending Red Crescent help to Sinai. In principle, the Israelis are willing to permit this and also are willing to give up some of the POWs (but not one or two murderers). If the President would also approve the return of 39 Israeli bodies, this would help. The President asked Fahmy to so instruct Gamasy.

Continuing, the Secretary pointed out that the basic Israeli problem is that they can only defend an agreement as a step toward peace. The President noted that all of his statements indicate Egypt wishes to push the peace process. However, the Israelis are seeking to give some political significance to this, which he is unable to accept. The Secretary observed that in the final analysis, the Israelis will claim one thing and Egypt can claim another.

Some statement is needed in the agreement, the Secretary said, that it is being made in furtherance of peace. The President said he has no objection to this. The Secretary thought this might be stated in terms of a significant step toward a just and lasting peace. The Israelis, he noted, will want something concrete. They want a renunciation of belligerency. He had told them that the President refused to accept this. The Israelis will, in the Secretary's judgment, seek something similar to what is in the Fahmy paper and also a reference to settling disputes through

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negotiations. The President observed that if this takes place through the negotiating process and is associated with pushing peace, it is agreeable. The Secretary thought it might require a phrase to the effect that the two parties refrain from the use of force and settle disputes by peaceful means. The President responded that if such a statement is indefinite, he cannot go along. Syria must be considered. If the statement applies to the peace process or until the fulfillment of the agreement or during negotiations, it would be agreeable. Otherwise, it is not, since this would constitute non-belligerency.

The Secretary noted the Israeli objection to the phrase "unless Israel attacks Syria" on the grounds of fuzziness. Syria might, for example, begin a war of attrition; the Israelis might then hit back and it becomes a matter of who attacks whom. The President commented that if it is only a war of attrition and not an invasion, some phrasing ought to be possible and asked Fahmy to consider this.

The Secretary noted that he had changed his mind about Rabin and Allon. They are not involved in auctioneering. They have a problem in getting any agreement through the Cabinet. (Mordechai) Gazit, who is doing some of the Israeli drafting, has pointed out some of the Israeli concerns. Specifically, if a new agreement is not something more than a cease-fire, what is it? Something more than a normal cease-fire is needed. The President observed that he had agreed in principle to pushing the peace process. Fahmy contended that the initial Disengagement Agreement is not a cease-fire agreement. The Secretary asserted it is. He asked in what way is paragraph 8 of the Fahmy paper different from what is already in effect? Fahmy noted that the first part of paragraph 8 deals with Egypt and the second, with Syria. The Secretary said that the Israelis question both parts.

Fahmy read the pertinent paragraph, contending that if Israel attacks Syria, this is not a war of attrition. Moreover, Egypt does not spell out therein what kind of action it might take. The Secretary noted that if a peace agreement is signed and any party wants to go to war, it can do so in exercise of its own sovereignty. Hence, such a statement is more symbolic than substantive. The

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two questions that have to be asked are: a) how is the first sentence of paragraph 8 different from what is already in the Disengagement Agreement, and b) the whole matter of a second sentence. If the first sentence applied only to Egypt, this might help. Some thought should also be given to appropriate language regarding an Israeli attack on Syria. The Israelis claim the Syrians are sending brigades to Lebanon and are worried. The President conceded this might happen. The Secretary noted that the Israelis are concerned that, in the event of strong reprisals for Palestinian raids or a war of attrition, the agreement might be affected. Fahmy said that if the action takes place in Lebanon, this is not covered. However, some reference to Syria is necessary in any agreement. He had had in mind a preemptive war on the part of the Israelis. The Secretary said that the Israelis do not want a situation where they cannot retaliate. They must show the appropriate language to their own public.

On the matter of progress toward peace, the Secretary continued, there is no problem with the general point. A number of specifics were proposed to symbolize the progress toward peace. Specifically:

a) passage through the Canal of Israeli cargoes and non-discrimination against Jews transitting the Canal;

b) suspension of economic boycott practices and restrictions. The President observed that this has to be done discreetly and selectively. Egypt is vulnerable to attacks in Arab meetings if this is not done carefully. The Secretary said publicity Arab boycott has received in the US also does not help.

c) A reduction of hostile propaganda activities. The Secretary recalled that Fahmy had told Ambassador Eilts that this might be toned down. The President responded, "Willingly."

d) Greater movement of people between the occupied parts of Sinai and Egypt. The Israelis would be prepared to permit visits of Arabs back and forth across the border. The Israelis had noted that there had been a "ferry" for students from Arish to Gaza. If they could present this

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as a step toward peace, this would be helpful. The President observed that this could be difficult. He recalled the attacks on King Hussein for allowing transit of the Allenby Bridge. If it takes place, it should not be mentioned. If it can be done discreetly, he had no objection. The Secretary observed that the Israelis will not be discreet. Fahmy asked what the Israelis mean by this point? The Secretary explained they want some movement along the dividing line and a maximum amount of transit. Fahmy asked if they are talking about Egyptians, foreigners or American travellers. The President thought this was not possible. The Secretary expressed the view that the Israelis will settle for Arabs in the area simply having transit rights. The President said he could not agree to tourists coming across the lines. However, a reunion of families and students could be arranged through the Mixed Commission as long as it is under the UN. Only Egyptians might be involved. The Secretary commented that the Israelis also include tourists, but opined if such an option is limited to families, it will already help. He observed that the Israelis see these points as substitutes for a declaration of non-belligerency.

e) Reduction of Egyptian pressure on third countries. The President interjected that this is impossible. Fahmy noted that Egypt has considerable influence with the African countries. The Africans might go along as a by-product of Egyptian action.

Regarding the Voice of Palestine (VOP), Egypt cannot consider this. To do so would be political suicide. If this is what the Israelis have in mind, Egypt cannot do it. The President noted he could, however, promise to control the VOP and Fahmy said "little by little."

The Secretary again noted that the Israelis are trying very hard. It is important that we give them something. Rabin, unfortunately, had publicly stated a short time ago that Israel would withdraw from the passes and the oilfields only for a non-belligerency pledge. Begin had asked him to repeat this and Rabin is now stuck with it.

f) Ships, planes and travellers coming to or going from Israel should be able to stop in Cairo.

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The President called this "absurd." When we reach the frontiers, such items can be discussed. Suppose they have Israeli passports, the President asked? In the case of foreigners, however, this might be possible. The Secretary explained there are two problems: first, travellers coming on the same plane to Cairo. The President said this is not yet possible. The second involves individuals who visit Israel and come to Cairo. The President observed that this is possible and can even be done on the same passport.

g) The area evacuated by the Israelis should be established as a buffer zone. The President asked if they had mentioned any specific area. The Secretary responded that they have not. He had given them Gamasy's map. As he had earlier told the President, they will not have the Egyptian line east of the passes. They feel strongly about this. He had suggested that the Egyptian line be moved forward a bit and that the Israelis withdraw from the passes. The President asked whether they will hold the eastern entrance to the passes? The Secretary reiterated that at the moment he has no specifics. Perhaps he could get the eastern end of the passes, but he was not sure.

The President noted Egypt has been insisting that it hold the eastern end of the passes. However, as a final fallback position he could agree to holding the western end of the passes, leaving the rest, including the eastern entrance, in UN hands. The Secretary thought it might be possible that they will give up the eastern end of the passes, but doubted they will agree to Egypt's holding the western end of the passes. He thought it might be possible to move the Egyptian line forward to the present Israeli line. The President said this was satisfactory. If the Israelis do not hold the eastern end, he could agree. The Secretary again noted that they want the entire evacuated area as a buffer zone. The President observed that if Egypt gets the present Israeli line, this is on the entrance to the passes. The Secretary pointed out this is not so. He reiterated his doubts that the Israelis will allow Egypt to hold the western end of the passes with military forces. Civilian occupation had not yet been discussed. The Secretary noted his idea was to put the areas evacuated under Egyptian civil administration.

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h) Establishment of new zones of limited armaments east of the new line. The President said this was agreeable. General Gamasy, who had been invited in by the President, was asked about the relationship of the present Israeli line from the west end of the passes. He noted the line is about ten kilometers west of the entrance. The Secretary affirmed that supervision in the buffer zone will be carried out by UN forces through a mixed committee. The Israelis will call such a committee anything other than an Armistice Committee. Fahmy suggested that it be called a Committee under the UN, such a group could discuss alleged violations, but not move around. It would consist of Israeli, Egyptian and UN personnel to look into alleged violations. The Secretary commented that the Committee could not check out violations on either side, but wondered about its doing so in the buffer zone. Gamasy thought this was the responsibility of UNEF. The Secretary said he understood that the President would not want Israelis behind the Egyptian lines. In the case of the buffer zone, this ought not to be an issue. If there is Egyptian civilian administration, such a Committee might help give reassurances. In any case, he was just raising the point.

i) Each side be permitted to maintain an "alert system" in the buffer zone. The President refused and the Secretary agreed this should be dropped.

j) Air reconnaissance missions by both sides over the edge of the buffer zone. The President said that if this is reciprocal, then he could agree. Gamasy pointed out in Arabic that any such arrangement would raise problems for both sides. The Secretary explained that Gur's concept is that each side give the other a schedule of the number of flights during a given period of time. The flights should be on a north-south axis. Gamasy insisted the Israelis can already detect from their side what the Egyptians are doing. Moreover, the UNEF will have its own reconnaissance for both sides. Fahmy noted Israeli reconnaissance will only be on the Egyptian side. Why, he asked, have a buffer zone? The Secretary noted the purpose is to check on the limited armaments zone by flying over the buffer zone. The President asked why the US cannot do this in the buffer zone. The Secretary said we are doing so now in the area between the Egyptian forward line and the Israeli forward line. However, the Israelis complain that they do not get the photos for ten days or so after each flight.

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(At this point, Sadat explained to Gamasy in Arabic that the evacuated territories would be a buffer zone.)

The President opined that the Israeli positions were "very mild."

The Secretary noted we had previously agreed on no time limit on the agreement. The Israelis would like to express this in terms of the agreement remaining in force until superceded by another agreement. The President said all parties will go to Geneva to work out a new agreement. What, however, if one is not obtainable? The Secretary wondered if the term "indefinite" might be used. He noted the Israelis are trying to present this as an element of greater permanence than before. Even with such an agreement, he observed, sovereign states can go to war. They also want UNEF to be extended for the duration of the agreement rather than on an annual basis. The President said he could agree to one year. The Secretary referred to paragraph 6 of Fahmy's paper on this point. Fahmy observed that the language of his paper re annual renewal makes it routine and gives it continuity. The President noted that he would agree to this at the borders, but at this time the term "annual" should be sufficient. The Secretary noted it will not be. The President then said he could not give this to the Israelis, but could give it to us. We could say that assurances have been received for annual renewals as long as the peace movement continues.

The Secretary then asked about the President's views on Geneva. The President said they will ask for the '67 borders. The Secretary said Israel will refuse. The Israelis are concerned that if they refuse at Geneva, Egypt might repudiate the agreement. The President agreed this needs be solved. He thought something could be reached on the point.

President Sadat then said he had some points on the Egyptian side. First, what about the Palestinians and Geneva? The Secretary recalled he had already said Geneva would result in a stalemate. He doubted that the Israelis would receive the Palestinians. On our part, we are ready to establish contact with the Palestinians, but only after an agreement is reached. To do so earlier will only cause problems.

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It will be a complicated question. Last week's raid on Tel Aviv is the sort of thing that makes it more difficult. We, in fact, stopped the Israelis from retaliating at a time when it would be embarrassing for the President.

The President then asked about the Syrians and the next new move? The Secretary recalled he had already told Asad he is ready to make a major effort after Sinai. The President wished to know if this could be before the UNDOF renewal. The Secretary said it will take a massive effort. We are ready to make the effort and are ready to talk to Asad along these lines. The President then asked if something could be done before the end of April. The Secretary said we could begin, but progress might be limited. Alternatively, we could go to Geneva. Fahmy suggested that the Secretary visit Damascus in early May to help with the UNDOF problem. The President reiterated this should take place in late April.

The Secretary asked about the President's idea with respect to Geneva? The President responded by asking for the Secretary's views. The Secretary noted that Asad would go to Geneva now to prevent Sadat from getting an agreement. If, however, Sadat gets one, Asad will not want to go to Geneva. The President said this agreement should first be fulfilled and then the reconvening of Geneva be faced.

Finally, the Secretary noted that the Israelis are willing to give up the oilfields, but first want time to build a new defense line before relinquishing the passes. They want to keep their present lines until a new line is built. General Gur had suggested nine months. The Secretary had said this was too long. Gamasy expressed concern that such an arrangement would mean Egyptian engineers going to the oilfields will have to pass through Israeli lines. The President stressed that the return of the oilfields is the most important thing even if it means going through Israeli lines. Fahmy observed that the oilfields might be surrounded by UNEF Force. The President agreed and noted that the Egyptian engineers can be protected in the enclave. Gamasy opined that Gur is anxious to keep his present positions. The Secretary thought Gur would agree to an enclave surrounded

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by the UN. Gamasy, however, continued to be worried about the position of the Egyptian engineers. Gamasy observed that there should be no problem for the Israelis to leave a corridor on the coast for the engineers. The Secretary thought Gur was reasonable, but Gamasy remained skeptical.

The Secretary also noted he had raised with the Israelis the President's concern about having too many forces in Sinai. The Israelis had responded they are willing in principle to discuss force dispositions. The President expressed pleasure. The Secretary noted the Israelis also claim Egypt is deploying its forces for an attack. Egypt had moved one division closer to the Canal. Gamasy insisted the division is 30 kilometers west of the Canal and in a training status. The President noted that after the Canal is reopened, it will be difficult for Egypt to attack. The Secretary said the Israelis believe that even with the Canal opened, Egypt can get troops across the Canal in eight hours.

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