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1975/03/20

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By SOM NARA DTS 8/11/00

SECRET NODIS CHEROKEE
MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

PARTICIPANTS: GOE SIDE:

PRESIDENT SADAT
FOREIGN MINISTER FAHMY
GENERAL GAMASY

US SIDE:

SECRETARY KISSINGER
UNDER SECRETARY SISCO
AMBASSADOR EILTS

PLACE: ASWAN, EGYPT

DATE: MARCH 20, 1975

TALK WITH KING FAISAL

The Secretary said he and his associates had a hectic time on this round. First, however, he would recount briefly his talk with King Faisal. He had given the King both possibilities: success or failure. If the current effort fails, he had told him we will continue a major effort to move toward a settlement. He would go back to the US to reassess our policy on the assumption that we want ultimate success. He had also told Faisal about President Sadat's insistence on no-non-belligerency pledge and moving into the passes. On Syria, he had told the King of his talk with Asad. Faisal responded that he preferred simultaneity, but whatever the President and the Secretary judge best is agreeable to him.

The President expressed appreciation.

TALKS IN ISRAEL

The Secretary related that he had met with the Israeli negotiating team on Tuesday evening to inform them of the President's views. The Israeli Cabinet had then met all day Wednesday, March 19, and again this morning. This morning the Israelis had again insisted on the Rosen-drafted statement

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in lieu of non-belligerency and on other political demands. The Secretary had refused to accept them. He had cautioned that, in the event of breakdown, there will have to be a reassessment of our policy vis-a-vis Israel.

On the political side, the Secretary continued, the positions of the two Parties are very close. There are minor differences. Thus, for example, the Israelis wish to reaffirm Article I of the initial Disengagement Agreement, having to do with the cease-fire. They would like something along those lines. Fahmy recalled that there had been something like this in para 3 of the Egyptian draft.

The Secretary then gave the President a paper containing three Israeli-drafted formulations, indicating the Israelis would like all three. While noting that most of the formulations are based on previous Egyptian drafts, he pointed out that the final sentence is additional. President Sadat, after looking at the document, indicated that the additional formulation poses a problem. There is no objection to the reaffirmation of the cease-fire. The President continued that he agrees in principle, but it will be a matter of phrasing. The Secretary observed that the Israelis had in effect dropped the paragraph he had brought back the last time (Rosenne-drafted paragraph) and substituted for it new language. The first two paragraphs of the new language are those of the Egyptians, along with the reaffirmation of Article I of the Disengagement Agreement. The other main elements, the Secretary continued, we can work out.

The Secretary then turned to the military concept, noting that this may be difficult. The Israelis had not yet given him a firm military line. As he understood the Israeli position, the Egyptians would move forward to the UN line. The Israelis, on their part, would withdraw their forward line to a position roughly in the middle of the passes. In the Abu Rodais area, there would be an Egyptian enclave. In the buffer zone between the two forward lines, Egypt might place a radar station on some high mountain to monitor against surprise attack. Behind the Israeli forward line there would be a zone of limited armaments equivalent to the distance between the Suez Canal and the Egyptian forward line. This zone of limited armaments would be the same for both sides. The Israelis would also be prepared to work out any assurance against surprise

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attack. So far as the Lance missiles are concerned, they would not deploy them if Egypt does not position its Scuds so that they are in range of the cities.

President Sadat asked about the eastern entrance of the passes? The Secretary said the Israelis will be in the eastern entrance of the passes, which would be in the limited armaments zone. The President asked if Egypt would then move to the western entrance?

The Secretary said the matter had been discussed for the first time that morning. He had believed that Rabin had the same authority as Mrs. Meir. Rabin wants to move toward peace. If there were an agreement, the Secretary expressed his belief that Rabin would use it as a platform toward peace. Rabin knows that the next two years must be used to move toward peace. Even Peres had stated that Israel cannot always live with a moving frontier. The Cabinet, however, is "demented." It had refused three times in a row various American suggestions. The Secretary thought we could move their line back a bit, but also opined that a point will be reached where they cannot put it to their Cabinet. Enormous efforts had been expended to persuade the Israelis to drop non-belligerency. He noted the Israeli position in the passes will be part of the thinned-out zone. They say they cannot attack out of the passes.

Alluding to the Abu Rodais enclave, Gamasy asked how Egypt could move people into the enclave? They will have to go through Israeli lines and be under Israeli guns. The Secretary indicated that he discussed with them that the Egyptians move to Abu Rodais only through the UN. Gamasy said there must be a UN zone around the oilfield. The President said he could not send his people to Abu Rodais to be under the Israelis.

The Secretary said he wanted the Egyptian reaction to the above concept. Gamasy responded that the Israeli forward line should be east of the passes. The Secretary reiterated that the Israeli forward line, as they conceive it, will be in the passes. Their main line will be east of the passes. The President observed that this means we have not agreed that the passes will be free of all troops. Gamasy added that if the Israelis give up part of Mitla

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pass, they will never do so in the case of Giddi or Sidr passes. The Secretary said that the Israelis claim they are giving up hundreds of billions of dollars of defense positions by going back. President Sadat countered that the Israelis will still be holding the passes. The Secretary also noted the Israelis say Egypt has an assurance against an Israeli surprise attack because of the UN forces positioned in front of the forward lines. Gamasy responded that the same is true for the Israelis. If the Israelis hold the eastern end of the passes, how can Egypt conduct reconnaissance operations in the mountains?

Fahmy asked why the line (between the enclave and the northern positions) is cut? The Secretary responded that the Israelis do not want to man a very long line. Fahmy and Gamasy argued that the line will be just as long in either event.

Sadat pointed out that the enclave will be isolated. The only road to it is along the shore, which the Israelis would still hold. Egyptians cannot ask the Israelis for permission to go to the oilfields. This is simply not a practical matter for the Egyptian side. Let us agree, the President continued, that there be no forces from either side in the passes. Only the UN and civilians will be in the oilfield. If we agree in principle, it should facilitate things. Gamasy demurred, but the President overruled him.

The Secretary asked whether, if the President has the road (leading to the enclave), he would then agree to demilitarization. Sadat said no demilitarization. He said there should be no military forces, only UN forces, i.e. just observers. The Israelis would be south of Abu Rodais. Gamasy added it should be south of el-Tur.

President Sadat added that we should be frank. The Israelis hold the Aqaba Gulf. Egypt should have the oilfield areas, taking into account that Egypt will be opening the Suez Canal.

On the matter of el-Tur, the Secretary noted that the Israelis say this is the last strong point between the Egyptian positions and Sharm el-Shaikh. If there were no forces there, it would be a difficult situation. Gamasy asked if there might be a limited armaments zone between Abu Rodais and el-Tur. The President said he would agree to civilian administration in that area. The Secretary

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said he did not know what the Israeli response might be. The President said he is trying to make it easier for the Secretary.

The Secretary observed that the Israelis are "unbelievable." It was a monumental task getting them to agree to anything. The President again said police forces and UN forces in the enclave. He could not send his people (to Belaiyim) under Israeli eyes. He needed the road. The President agreed that the approach between el-Tur and Sharm al-Shaikh is easy and, much to Gamasy's distress, accepted the fact that al-Tur need not be held.

The President said that he cannot agree to the Israelis being in the middle of the passes. The passes should be free. Both eastern and western entrances should be left to the UN.

Gamasy noted that, given the different lengths of the passes, the buffer zone at Giddi would be about 6 kilometers, where the other two would be about 20. In the north, the buffer area would have to be discussed.

The Secretary noted that the Israelis do not want to give up Bir Jifjafah.

The President observed that he had agreed on some political terms and now the Israelis are being difficult on the military side. Fahmy thought the problem was difficult, but not insoluble. The Secretary said the Israelis argue that they are withdrawing large distances. Their main line is going back to the other side of the passes. Sadat responded that the Israelis will still be holding the middle of the passes, hence their withdrawal is not substantial.

Fahmy recalled his impression that the original Israeli proposal had been to take eastern end of the passes if Egypt holds the western end of the passes. The Secretary responded in the negative: If Egypt agrees to non-belligerency, the Israelis will leave the passes. Now the Israelis say there is no adequate political content (to the agreement), hence it is difficult on the military side.

Fahmy observed that the linkage between the political and military aspects constitutes the problem. The President

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again asked what could he say to his people? The Israelis would still be holding half the passes. The Secretary pointed out that the President could show a considerable withdrawal of Israeli forces. Sadat responded that withdrawal will be for no more than 20-25 kilometers.

Gamasy observed that the Israelis could, from their main line, attack the Suez Canal area with 175 mm guns. The President commented that he could not guarantee the safety of navigation in the Suez Canal if the Israelis are in their proposed positions. The Secretary said something can be worked out whereby artillery is positioned out of range (of the cities) in peacetime. Gamasy countered that whenever there is a period of tension, the Israelis will move artillery forward. The Secretary noted Israel (artillery) should not even be in the eastern end of the passes under such an agreement.

The President reiterated that the eastern and western entrances of the passes should be under the UNEF as a buffer zone. Egypt will move to the UN line. In the north, the Egyptian zone might be wider. The Secretary said he had not discussed this.

Fahmy observed that the Israelis should not expect to discuss military apart from political considerations. The Secretary said the Israelis will respond that from a military viewpoint, the Egyptians are gaining; therefore they want something political. For non-belligerency they would do much. The Israelis must also show their people something. The President responded, "We have given much."

The Secretary said he is trying to find something to bring them from here. On Syria, we could give them an assurance against any preemptive attack on Syria. In turn, the Israelis want a commitment that if Syria attacks them, Egypt will not support Syria. The President agreed. He recalled that after the first Disengagement Agreement, the Syrians had begun a war of attrition, but Egypt had not moved. He authorized the Secretary can say this to the Israelis. The Secretary said he assumed this is so if UNEF finds the Syrians initiated the action. The President agreed.

In another area, the Secretary said that on the eight points (concession areas), it might help if he could have something concrete on the boycott to tell to the Israelis. Fahmy responded that Egypt will begin with Ford. Egypt

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will be condemned by the Arabs for this, but Egypt will do so. Moreover, when the Suez Canal is reopened, Israeli cargoes will go through.

The Secretary asked if vessels that deliver cargo to Egyptian ports could go on to Israeli ports (without danger of being boycotted). The President said no. Israeli cargoes could go only through the Suez Canal. For 20-25 kilometers, he noted, the Israelis want everything. What about the remaining 185 kilometers that they will continue to occupy? The President asked if the Secretary had seen the Soviet statement of the previous day expressing readiness to assist in the peacemaking process? The Secretary said he had.

The President continued -- what will be left for a later stage if all that the Israelis are demanding comes now? The Israelis will still hold 185 kilometers and still say they will not go back to the '67 borders. He described them as "spoiled children."

The Secretary asked where, if the Israelis should give up the eastern entrance to the passes, they might go. Gamasy noted they could go to a mountain line behind the passes, with their main line behind this. Such positions would offer them both mobile and static defense. Sadat again said he cannot accept the middle of the passes. The Secretary asked if the President could accept an Israeli monitoring installation, provided Egypt also has one in the buffer zone? (Gamasy here pointed out on the map the Israeli monitoring station on a mountain just north of the Giddi pass.) The President responded in the negative. He reiterated that if both sides give up the passes to the UN, this will be agreeable to him. The Secretary said the Israelis would agree to Egypt also building a monitoring station. The President replied in the negative, saying this is not practical. Gamasy pointed out that the Israelis could, if they wish, build another monitoring station on a mountain behind the passes. Apart from this, he noted that the Egyptian forward line should not simply be the UN line, but further to the east.

The Secretary said he will have to talk further with the Israelis. He could not think of anything more to ask the Egyptians. He asked if there is anything more possible on the matter of duration?

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Fahmy commented that Egypt wants to facilitate the Secretary's job, but does not see the logic of linkage. The logic of linkage, the Secretary pointed out, is that the Israeli Cabinet is out of control and the Kneset must also be satisfied. Sadat opined that the Israelis are deliberately prolonging the talks without making decisions.

The Secretary said he now has the bare outline of an agreement. The only decision now is the military line. After that, an agreement could be written quickly.

The President said he would give the Secretary a map as Egypt believes the line has to be. We must make it a tight agreement, he indicated, or people will "mock at us."

(Two maps were provided by Gamasy the following morning: one shows the proposed Egyptian line; the other that same line along with what the Egyptians believe would be a proper Israeli line.

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