

MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE
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1973-11-8, Faisal, Kissinger, Meeting

MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

PARTICIPANTS:

King Fahys ibn 'Abd al-'Aziz Al Sa'ud
 Prince Fahd ibn 'Abd al-'Aziz Al Sa'ud, Second
 Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of
 Interior
 'Umar al-Saqqaq, Minister of State for Foreign
 Affairs

Dr. Rashad Pharaon, Royal Adviser
 Shaikh Ibrahim al-Sowayel, Saudi Arabia
 Ambassador to the United States

Dr. Henry A. Kissinger, Secretary of State
 Joseph Sisco, Assistant Secretary of State for
 Near Eastern and South Asian Affairs
 Ambassador James Atkins
 Peter W. Rodman, NSC Staff
 Isa Sabbagh, First Secretary, U.S. Embassy,
 Beirut (interpreter)

TIME AND DATE: Thursday, November 8, 1973

8:45 - 10:25 p.m.

PLACE:

The Royal Palace
Riyadh, Saudi Arabia

[At the opening of the meeting, the members of the party were introduced to the King. There was a brief photo opportunity. After the photographers were dismissed, servants entered and served cups of coffee spiced with cardamom.]

Faysal: I hope you have had no difficulties on this trip.

Kissinger: No, Your Majesty, I've had a very good trip and a trip I hope can contribute to peace in the Middle East.

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By [Signature] Dated [Signature] Apr 07

[p. 1 of 13]

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Fayssal: This is our hope also, that it will lead to peace.

Kissinger: I have had the benefit of some of your reflections on peace in the Middle East, Your Majesty. I wonder if there are some additional comments you would care to make that I could transmit to President Nixon.

Fayssal: Of course our deepest hope is that peace and stability will reign in the Middle East, and Your Excellency is aware of my views in the past: in essence, that there will be no stability and peace unless Israel withdraws from the occupied territories and the Palestinians go back to their own homes. And that is why we sincerely hope that it will come about as expeditiously as possible, and that the Arabs will be permitted to return to friendship with their American friends. And we also hope that this in itself -- the restoration of peace and stability, and of friendship -- will automatically lead to a shrinking of Communist influence in the area.

Kissinger: Would Your Majesty like me to describe first what we did on this trip, and then describe where we proceed?

Fayssal: As Your Excellency would like.

Kissinger: I remember vividly, Your Majesty, your visit to the United States, when you pointed out to our President some of the dangers you saw in the situation. And many of the predictions of His Majesty have come true.

I thought it would be useful if I explained to His Majesty what our thinking is, so that even if he disagrees with us in some details he can understand us and perhaps contradict us where we are wrong.

Fayssal: Please.

Kissinger: Between 1967 and 1973, Your Majesty, the United States did not succeed in doing something decisive about the problems in the Middle East. My predecessor, Secretary Rogers, and Secretary Sisco made an effort for some two years, but it did not have the full organized power of the United States behind it -- which was not their fault. The difficulty for us, Your Majesty, has been that until this year, most of our domestic attention was focused on the war in Viet-Nam, and we did not find it easy to take on the domestic upheaval that it would represent domestically. After the end of the war in Viet-Nam, Your Majesty, the President directed me to turn my attention to the Middle East -- and I must say,

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Your Majesty, that he did this before the way, at the end of August and in early September.

When I met Your Majesty's Foreign Minister in New York, at the end of September, I pointed out to him that we would make a major effort at the end of November, and we discussed how the U.S. could cooperate with the Arab world. Then the war broke out, and accelerated all developments.

Now the war presented us, Your Majesty, with a particular problem. I know some of our actions embarrassed some of our old friends. While we may not gain your approval, perhaps I can explain to you why we acted as we did.

From the first day we say that the war proved the indispensable necessity of finding peace. And President Sadat will confirm to you, Your Majesty, that we exchanged correspondence with him every day, even in the most bitter days, when we were doing things that were most painful for Egypt. And we always told President Sadat what I'm saying to Your Majesty -- that when the war is over, the U.S. will use its influence for peace, no matter what we do during the war.

Our motivation during the war, Your Majesty, was to prevent the increase of Communist influence. And when the Soviet Union poured arms into the area, then we believed we had to react to that. I know Your Majesty doesn't agree with this, but I thought Your Majesty would want to understand our motivations during the two weeks of war.

But now the war is over. We were instrumental in bringing about a ceasefire, even though the Israelis wanted to continue fighting. We have been instrumental -- in fact, we have been decisive -- in bringing about the resupply of the Third Egyptian Army. And when I met with President Sadat yesterday, he and I agreed on a settlement to the ceasefire problem, which now has been accepted -- under great pressure -- by Israel. This makes it possible to open peace negotiations.

Incidentally, if Your Majesty wishes, we can leave a text of the agreement with your Foreign Minister. It will be announced tomorrow evening.

Fayssal: [nods] I am grateful to Your Excellency for these elaborations and explanations, and I would like to mention the fact -- that you know -- that in the past I repeatedly explained to President Nixon and Secretary Rogers the pressing need for the U.S. to bring pressure on Israel to withdraw from

TOP SECRET/SENSITIVE
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12-13-07

TOP SECRET/SENSITIVE
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the occupied territories -- worrying about the inevitable explosion I foresaw.

Kissinger: His Majesty turned out to be correct.

Faysal: Because the Communists, as you know, would like the situation to remain as it is, because it is fertile ground to penetrate further. We know the U.S., throughout its history, has always stood up against the aggressor. Your Excellency recalls vividly in the last war when the Nazis cast avaricious eyes and moved against Poland and Czechoslovakia, the U.S. without hesitation moved against them, with the British and French. In 1956, the U.S. did not hesitate to line up against the British and French allied with Israel which committed aggression.

If the United States after the 1967 war had immediately taken steps not only to stop Israeli advances but to move back to the lines of June 4, 1967, we wouldn't have seen these recent developments.

As I have explained, Your Excellency, and as I have made it clear to President Nixon, my thoughts are that unless the Israelis withdraw from the occupied territories and permit the refugees to return to their homes, there will be no peace. Once this happens, there will be peace.

I am speaking frankly, of course, as a friend. Actually it saddens me, it is painful to me to have to take steps which not only cause an imbalance in our relationship, but harm our friendship.

But as you recall, I read in 1967, events opened up more avenues for the Communists to advance. And what did they do? They ran around stirring up trouble, spreading the idea that Saudi Arabia is in cahoots with Israel. Because the Communists know that we are their biggest obstacle in the Communists' path in this area, that's precisely why they are ceaselessly stirring up trouble to remove us.

Kissinger: I agree with Your Majesty on the Communist political and security purposes.

Faysal: But unfortunately Israel seems to be preparing the ground for the success of these designs. That is why I say, and I would like to repeat, that Israel must withdraw from the occupied territories and permit the return of those who have fled. Without these two practical steps, there will be no guarantee of peace in the area.

TOP SECRET/SENSITIVE
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1
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TOP SECRET/SENSITIVE
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12
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112

Saqqaf: I want to point out that some have the impression that His Majesty doesn't care any more about the issue of Jerusalem. This is, of course, not true.

Faysal: It is unfortunate that among those of the Jewish faith there are those who embraced Zionism, and this will be to the detriment of the Jewish people. Before the advent of Israel, of the Jewish state, there was nothing to harm the good relations between them. The Arabs had no reason to resist them. There were many Jews living in Arab countries; we called them Arab Jews. When the Jews were persecuted in Spain, for example, the Arabs protected them. In Spain, the Romans also drove the Jews from these areas, but the Arabs welcomed them.

These are problems created by Israel, aided and abetted by the intrigues and designs of Israel.

At the Yalta Conference, President Franklin Roosevelt's meeting with Stalin, the President and Churchill wanted to do something for the Jews, and it was Stalin who said: "No, we must have a state for them." And the Soviet Ambassador at the UN accused the U.S. of placing obstacles to the creation of the Jewish State.

After 1947, in the ensuing negotiations, Count Bernadotte sent a representative urging that the territory be rescinded. It was the Soviet Union then that opposed the ceasefire.

So this points out the Communists' designs. Doubtless, Your Excellency is aware of all these points. What is needed now, at the risk of repeating myself, is Israeli withdrawal as soon as possible from the occupied territories, and allowing the Palestinians to go home. If these two things can be done, it can happen that peace and stability can be restored.

The U.S. always stands up against the aggressor, and many regard Israel as the aggressor. From 1958 to 1967, there was never any act of aggression against Israeli territory, in spite of the fact that after 1949 Israel was offered a certain defined territory, as you know.

I present this argument for a major effort. I therefore urge my American friends that they should not abet this tendency in Israel. We actually think the U.S. has the most of its friends in the Arab world. And we sincerely hope once the U.S. gives up its out-and-out support for Israel..... which is not even in your country's interest.

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12
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112

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As a friend of the U.S., I hold close to my heart U.S. interests, almost as close to my heart as my own country's interest.

But unfortunately, and Your Excellency will realize it immediately, it is inconsistent with your interests. We always want to establish this, and it is painful also to hear that there are in America elements -- and outside the Jews -- who support Israeli superiority. There is no reason to continue this. We feel it is incumbent on the U.S. to realize this.

It is not a question of racism but a question of loving one's patrie. We deal, even in the Arab world, with people on the same level, whether Jews or not. There must be established in Palestine, by agreement, a mixed Jewish-Moslem state. No one refers to the U.S. as a "Christian state."¹¹ They will open it up to all in a democratic process.

How is it conceivable to witness the driving away of an indigenous people from their homes and territory, and at the same time bring in people who don't really belong there [but bring them in only] because of their religion? Now the greatest part of the immigration is from the Soviet Union. They seem to want to establish a Communist base right in the middle of this region. As you know, the Communists are against the beliefs of any kind. All faiths believe in a deity, but the Communists don't.

Kissinger: Your Majesty, the problem the U.S. now faces is how we can go from the present situation -- what we recognize is intolerable to the Arabs -- to a genuine peace.

Faysal: Start by having Israel withdraw.

Kissinger: I agree; Israel has to make withdrawals. But it is a problem for the U.S. how to bring this about. If you permit me, Your Majesty, I'd like to put before you our thoughts on this.

Faysal: I must draw your attention to my deepest thought, that Israel would withdraw the moment Israel saw that you would no longer protect it, cuddle it.

Kissinger: I have examined His Majesty's thinking on this subject, and I must say it has considerable merit.

The problem is that the Communists can give arms to the Arabs but only the U.S. can bring peace for the Arabs. His Majesty pointed out that the

~~TOP SECRET/SENSITIVE~~
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12-13-07

TOP SECRET/SENSITIVE
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U.S. can influence Israel to choose a course of peace. I believe His Majesty is right.

The United States can do it, but it is a very difficult enterprise for the United States. Because the conditions that produce the American relationship to Israel have a very profound significance within the United States in certain domestic groups. The reason why in the past many initiatives have not succeeded is because they were treated as foreign policy problems and insufficient attention was devoted to handling the domestic situation.

I'm speaking very candidly to His Majesty.

Faysal: I appreciate your frankness and I reciprocate when I say it is incumbent on the citizens of a country to be loyal to that country.

Kissinger: That may be true, but it is a fact that many people in key places in our Government, including many in Congress, identify U.S. interests with Israel's interests.

Faysal: I repeat, we can't see it. What interests does the United States have? On the contrary, as far as we can see, Israel is a liability to the Americans, costing you much.

Kissinger: Regardless of the pressures, the important thing is that the President has now decided to make a major effort to bring about a settlement. Contrary to 1967, the President is prepared to fight the battles that are necessary to bring this result. I told your Foreign Minister this, and in honor of His Majesty I confirm it to you today.

Faysal: We are very hopeful that our way of thinking ... that you will see your way to go along with these suggestions.

Kissinger: We want to move in that direction. But I would like His Majesty to understand certain problems on our side. We have in recent weeks given considerable proof that we're moving in the direction that His Majesty indicated: We saved the Egyptian Third Army. And we have brought about an agreement that will now be signed tomorrow or the day after on stabilizing the ceasefire. And we have agreed with President Sadat on the opening of a peace conference and on the direction we will move in a peace conference. And we are going to establish friendly relations with every Arab country that is prepared to do it. And His Majesty will remember that I specifically mentioned Syria at the dinner table.

TOP SECRET/SENSITIVE
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TOP SECRET/SENSITIVE
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-8-

Faysal: Incidentally, before I mention Syria, I should say that I asked a Syrian friend whether Syria would have anything against a visit by you to Syria. He said instantly, "On the contrary; we would welcome it."

Kissinger: That was a misunderstanding. The principle of a visit to Syria is accepted, and we will maintain contacts.

Faysal: This was Syria's reply to my message to our Ambassador in Syria, and we got an answer back from their Foreign Minister.

Kissinger: We will keep this very much in mind, and I want to make clear we do not intend to exclude Syria from contact at a very high level on an equal basis.

Faysal: This is absolutely right, because Syria cannot be ostracized.

Kissinger: I assure Your Majesty that we will deal with Syria with great seriousness, and any advice His Majesty has on this will be greatly appreciated.

Faysal: We confirm that the Syrians are anxious to meet with you and receive you at the highest level.

Kissinger: We will reestablish contact with them immediately on my return to the U.S. On this trip my schedule was absolutely fixed but, I repeat, we will establish contact at the highest level. When I come to Europe in December, perhaps I can use the occasion to meet with the President of Syria.

Faysal: Yes.

Kissinger: Let me point out some of our problems. We will move in the direction I indicated but we must be given the opportunity to organize our domestic situation or our effort will fail. We must prevent the combination of the attacks already being made on the President from other reasons with the attacks from certain religious groups from becoming overwhelming. Therefore, we will begin to organize our support in Congress and in the newspapers and elsewhere. This will take us some weeks.

Faysal: We wish you every success in this regard, and we hope you will move as expeditiously as possible.

TOP SECRET/SENSITIVE
EXCLUSIVELY EYES ONLY

12/13/07

~~TOP SECRET/SENSITIVE
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-9-

Kissinger: I have been told that His Majesty is a man of his word and that he respects people who act the same way.

Faysal: Of course, I appreciate that, but I also would appreciate -- and I would shout it from the rooftops if I could -- that Americans will become aware of their interest.

Kissinger: His Majesty will see in the next months that we will make a major effort to make progress.

Faysal: A few months will be a bit much for the impatient, but let's hope it can be weeks. To get rid of Communism once and for all.

Kissinger: Let me touch on a subject about which I know nothing and our Ambassador knows a great deal. This is the question of the embargo on oil by certain Arab states. We understand the emotions that produced this, and we are not debating those.

Faysal: This is precisely what makes me red hot with anxiety to expedite this as fast as possible, so we can go not only to rescinding the ban but to increase our production.

It has been almost calamitous to my nerves to have to take this action with my American friends. My colleagues can confirm that yesterday I nearly was incapacitated because of my nerves, but I controlled myself and was able to receive you. Yesterday I received the credentials of your Ambassador, and -- parenthetically, these two things are not related -- I nearly had a nervous breakdown. My doctor told me to rest. Thanks be to God, I recovered and was able to receive you.

Therefore, I repeat, I am most anxious that this happen most expeditiously, so that we can not only go back to the status quo but increase our production.

Kissinger: But I want to put before His Majesty the following proposition: The decision has had enormous effect -- not economic, because we can handle it economically, but psychologically, coming as it did from an old friend of the United States.

Faysal: That is precisely why I have suffered even more than you.

~~TOP SECRET/SENSITIVE
EXCLUSIVELY EYES ONLY~~

(69 of 125)

TOP SECRET/SENSITIVE
EXCLUSIVELY EYES ONLY

-10-

Kissinger: And we take it very seriously. But now we face a new situation. The strategy of those who oppose peace has been to portray the Arab world as basically hostile to the United States and therefore to mobilize public support for opposition to the peace effort. Over the next period, Your Majesty, we are prepared to move in the direction of peace, on a course we already discussed with President Sadat. It will be very difficult if now in America we face a situation where we have to ration gas and in winter have to limit the heating of our housing. In this situation, two things will happen: First, President Nixon's authority will be further weakened, because he will be blamed whatever the reason. And as his authority is weakened, his ability to act decisively in other fields is weakened. Second, certain forces will be able to use this to generate hostility to the Arab world in general. And since these forces have a great deal of influence on the press and TV anyway, it makes it enormously difficult. And this is why I wanted to put, for the consideration of Your Majesty, [the idea] not of reversing the principle, but of limiting its application. If what I say is not realized, His Majesty will be forced [to reimpose it]. But what I am suggesting is the possibility of limiting this difficulty, to ease the task of those moving towards peace.

I've discussed this problem frankly with President Sadat, and he has said he would not oppose such a decision.

Faysal: Of course it would be a great pleasure to us to be in a position to rescind it immediately. But you understand the difficulty we are in, and the embarrassment to us. This decision has been in our mind for a long time. But in order to come to a happy medium and achieve what you are asking, it would be for the United States to announce immediately that Israel must withdraw from the territories and allow the return of the Palestinians and -- and this is a new thing -- that if Israel does not do so, you will no longer support it.

Kissinger: May I say something, not with the idealism of His Majesty, but in its practical aspects? If we make a dramatic announcement, we will create a domestic upheaval. We have to move step-by-step toward a goal.

If I can say something here in strict confidence -- that will not be repeated -- that in the next few days we are planning to end the airlift that was started during the war.

Faysal: That is something that should be.

TOP SECRET/SENSITIVE
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Kissinger: But we can do certain things, but if we announce total programs it will be very dangerous for us.

Faysal: That is exactly why you are on the right path, and I am urging only speed.

Kissinger: That is the situation, Your Majesty, and we will move with the speed that the situation permits. But if I can urge His Majesty to consider -- not for a decision here but he will want to reflect on it -- but to resort not to pressure now but to a way to make our task easier. And if we don't produce results, His Majesty is free to return to the previous policy.

Our Ambassador, who is an expert on the oil problem, will be able to confirm to His Majesty that in the next period, when diplomacy will be most active, the oil restrictions will be annoying but not decisive. But they can be used by our opponents to mobilize public opinion with the view that we are yielding to Arab blackmail -- which we can already see in the newspapers in Israel and certain U.S. papers. And it is important to what we should see as a common objective.

Faysal: This is our own predicament -- the other side of the coin -- that the Communists are accusing some Arab elements of going along with U.S. pressure.

Kissinger: One reason we are having the Soviet Union in the peace conference is not because they can bring peace but to make it harder for them to do mischief during the conference.

Faysal: Yes, but I'd also like to forewarn you that they cannot be trusted.

Kissinger: Your Majesty, I can assure you that we have no illusions about the Soviet Union. I don't have to remind you that the Soviet Union is our enemy.

Faysal: In essence, I repeat, if we aim at the right path by getting Israel to withdraw and permit the people to return, then the Soviet Union will have no leg to stand on.

Kissinger: That is why we want to mobilize support. Your Ambassador can confirm that it is essential not to further weaken the authority of the President. The President will have to spend all his time explaining why he

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-12-

didn't foresee the energy crisis, why there has to be rationing, etc. It will strengthen our opponents who do not want peace and weaken your friends who do want peace. And if it doesn't come about, unintentionally, you can return to your previous policy. That is understood.

Faysal: I offer a ready answer with which to hit those who want to accuse you of succumbing to Arab blackmail -- it is to say that the only reason the Arabs are doing this is our support for the enemy of the Arabs.

Kissinger: Your Majesty, it won't work this way. Our best propaganda in the United States is to say that we are on a responsible course, not because we are anti-Israel or pro-Arab but because we are interested in peace in the Middle East and the national interests of the United States. That's the only argument they will understand. If we debate the merits of the Arab-Israeli dispute, there will be more people defending the Israeli side than the Arab side, even if His Majesty is right. That is why we want to raise the level of argument to the level of the American national interest, and that cannot be debated.

Faysal: Of course I appreciate your valid explanations. But at the same time I wish Your Excellency to appreciate the position of Saudi Arabia, which was a decision not of ours alone but as part of a joint decision. We are part of the Arab family. What I need is the wherewithal to go to my colleagues and urge this. Therefore, first I need speed; and second to announce it [your position] publicly.

Kissinger: We will do this at various stages of the negotiation. But if we do it before the negotiations, it will defeat itself. If we do it before the negotiations, we will be less effective in the negotiations.

I have in the past not made promises to Arab leaders because I was not sure I could deliver anything. Since September I have spoken with many Arab leaders and I don't want to promise more than I can deliver.

Faysal: We sincerely hope you'll achieve this goal and we wish you success.

Kissinger: I know His Majesty wouldn't wish to make a decision on this subject while I'm here. I would just wish that after I've been here, His Majesty might bear in mind this -- that pressure could make the task difficult, or impossible. And I hope His Majesty might consider that the efforts we have done already -- bringing about a ceasefire, bringing about

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TOP SECRET/SENSITIVE
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-13-

the relief of the Third Army, bringing about stabilization of the ceasefire, and ending the airlift next week -- would be evidence of the direction in which we are moving.

Faysal: We pray to Almighty God that He will continue to grant you success in all these noble efforts. I spoke very frankly to Your Excellency because I respect your proven ability and wisdom.

Kissinger: I appreciate His Majesty putting his problems before us. Our Ambassador can pursue this subject at a later period.

Faysal: We will of course welcome discussions with His Excellency the Ambassador always.

I repeat our supplication to God and our prayers that all these problems will be removed as expeditiously as possible.

Kissinger: I give His Majesty the assurance that we will make a major effort, with all the dedication of which we are capable, for our friends in the Arab world.

Faysal: And I wish you the greatest success.

Kissinger: I don't want to tire His Majesty, but of course I am at His Majesty's disposal. Should we continue?

Faysal: I appreciate your consideration.

[The meeting then ended at 10:25 p.m.]

TOP SECRET/SENSITIVE
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100-134124 Q13 of 13