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 By *D* NARA Date *4/10/88*

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

1973-12-16, Frangie, Kissinger, Meeting

SECRET/NODIS (XGDS)

December 16, 1973

MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

PARTICIPANTS:

Lebanon
 Suleiman Frangie, President of Lebanon
 Taqi al-Din al-Sulh, Prime Minister
 Fuad Naffa, Foreign Minister
 Major General Iskandar Ghanim, Commander
 of the Lebanese Armed Forces
 Najib Sadaqa, Director General, Lebanese
 Foreign Ministry

United States

Henry A. Kissinger, Secretary of State
 William Buffum, US Ambassador to Lebanon
 Joseph J. Sisco, Assistant Secretary of State
 Harold H. Saunders, NSC Staff
 Camille Nowfel, Interpreter, Department of State

DATE AND PLACE: Sunday, December 16, 1973, at the Officers' Club
 at the Rayak Air Base in Lebanon

Kissinger:

Thank you for the extremely cordial reception you have given me. It is symptomatic of the close relations between our two countries. Your Foreign Minister and I had a very useful discussion this morning. We spoke to him with great frankness.

I might add to those points I explained to the Foreign Minister one comment on the US-Soviet role in the negotiations which I did not want to make in the larger group. We have no illusions about the Soviet Union, but we think that they can do less damage if they are involved in the Peace Conference than they could do if they were outside the Conference playing with the radical groups opposed to the Conference.

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DECLAS - Date Impossible to Determine.

BYAUTH - Dr. Henry A. Kissinger

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As I explained frankly, no matter what the formal arrangements at the Conference are, we will deal with whatever groups seem most useful. Our objective is to reduce the Soviet role in the Arab World, not to enhance it. We want to maneuver it in such a way that they will not gain. I tell you this in the strictest confidence.

Frangie: We welcome you. We wish you all success in the efforts which aim at the peace which all of us want.

You may have wondered why we are the guests of General Ghanim today. [In an attempt at humor] This is the first expression of our action against you. You deprived us of a free weekend by coming, so we decided that we would take a pleasant weekend ride. So we deprived you of the pleasures of seeing a demonstration against you in Beirut.

Kissinger: I thought that many of my former students wanted to greet me.

Frangie: Lebanon is the only country from the Mediterranean to Japan whose system resembles Western political systems. After World War II, all of the Arab countries considered themselves pro-Western, except that they did not have a warm feeling for the colonizers.

Then we had the Palestine problem which imposed changes on this part of the world and changes in our systems. For instance, Nasir rose against Farouk as a result of the Palestine problem. In Syria Qasim made his coup because of the Palestine problem. Then in Syria there were a series of coups because of that problem. The point is that systems began to be changed in the 1950s because of the results of the Palestine problem. In 1956 the Suez War took place and the position of the West caused many countries here to turn against the Western camp.

Unfortunately as a result of turning toward the East, states had to get their weapons there, and that gave the Eastern camp increased influence. The unfriendly behavior of some friendly countries toward this area opened the door to Communist influence. In some of the Arab countries which

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remain friendly toward the West, the people accused their leaders of high treason. In spite of this, the friends of the West regained their friendship. I myself can tell you a lot about anti-Western demonstrations because they have been directed partly at me.

Often leaders of the demonstration against the West are American youth. American citizens in Lebanon have often demonstrated against their own country--rightly so, we believe. Once, American citizens in Lebanon marched 40 kilometers on foot to demonstrate against the United States. American citizens when they see and live the facts that are the consequences of the Palestine problem and when they are not subject to Zionist political influence, they begin to feel as the Arabs here feel.

We know that during the past 25 years, for any American politician--before the oil was used as a political weapon--giving support to the Arab cause was tantamount to committing political suicide. But today after petroleum has become so effective as a political weapon, it has become incumbent on every American and every Arab to bring about a solution to the Palestine problem.

After the October War and after US aid to Israel and after the Arabs were sure of the effect of oil as a political weapon, we believe any delay in a just settlement would subject leaders in the oil-producing countries to radical coups d'etat. If King Faisal, the Amir of Kuwait or the Amirs in the Persian Gulf were to fall, who would take their place? Something like this happened in Aden. The men who took over there were not only Marxists but Maoists. If we should reach such a situation, who will prevent the Communists from taking over around the whole area? What benefit could result should such a thing happen? If Israel does continue to exist in that situation, it shall exist in a huge prison. There is no advantage in reaching a solution where Israel is in a prison. If, on the other hand, because of your efforts, Israel can exist as a free nation, the Arabs must exist as free nations as well. In that case the interest of the West and of the Arabs would be preserved. Furthermore, this embarrassment which every friend of the US finds himself in would be removed.

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What I am saying, I believe, is true unless there is an American scheme to lose the entire Middle East. I do not believe this is the case. No state wants to lose its principles just to establish a base in Israel. I do not believe this is the American planning.

I would like to make a few remarks on the basis of your talk with the Foreign Minister:

First, you mentioned the rights of the Palestinian people, their right to live as human beings.

Second, you mentioned the problem of Jerusalem. As you know, it has been an Arab city since the Arabs came into existence. Then came the Jewish religion, also born in Palestine. Likewise Christianity, born in Palestine. However, there were 800 years between the last Jewish control and Arab control of Jerusalem. During the tenth century, a fanatic Christian spirit in Europe expressed itself in the Crusades and Europeans occupied Jerusalem for 200 years. And it became evident that those who came in the name of religion had political motives. Then they disagreed among themselves--I expect that is what will happen in Israel--and an Arab hero liberated Jerusalem. Then until 1948, the Moslem Arabs and the Arab Christians and Arab Jews lived happily in Jerusalem together. I wish Israeli leaders today would recall these events because we believe that history repeats itself.

There remains one question--the cause to which you have pledged yourself. For this effort we wish you all success. Your predecessor, Secretary Rogers, came up with the Rogers Plan. The Arabs had difficulty accepting Israel's existence. All we are asking now is that Israel continue to exist by the will of the Arabs, otherwise they cannot continue to exist in this part of the world.

In closing, I would like to say that Lebanon is the greatest example of how people of different faiths can live together. There are seventeen different denominations living here. The Prime Minister is a Moslem, and I would like him to express his views.

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SECRET/NODIS (XGDS)Prime Minister:

I have no special point of view. I agree with the President. There is only one difference between us--he worships in a church and I in a mosque.

As a former professor of history, you may know the story about Mohamed. A delegation of Christian Ethiopians came to him, and when the time came to pray, the question arose as to where each group should pray. Mohamed suggested that the Moslems pray in one corner, and the Christians in another.

We have always wanted Palestine to be for all. This is our wish now. The Moslems who control Jerusalem have always held that all people of the book should have a position in Jerusalem. Arab countries from the ocean to the gulf have had Jewish cabinet members over the years.

In closing, I would like to say that this problem can be solved only by the United States and no one can convince the Arabs otherwise. The US is the only country that can convince Israel and can bring about results. It is important for the US to understand the Arabs.

Kissinger:

I appreciate very much this frank explanation. As you know, we are engaged in a very major effort to try to bring peace to this area. But for this effort to succeed I am glad that you noticed the importance of the US role. Many of our allies are very good at making proclamations and if you would like rhetoric, I recommend that you deal with the Europeans and the Japanese.

Frangie:

No. We want action.

Kissinger:

If you want action, you will have to deal with the US and we will have to proceed in our own way. Action takes longer than rhetoric. At home, we could face a strong domestic reaction. Therefore, while we have an obligation to understand the Arab position, the Arabs have an obligation to understand the US. We are moving in a situation with great complexity to try to bring peace.

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We cannot fight every battle simultaneously. One of the difficulties my predecessor had is that he put all of his ideas into one paper. So you have to understand that we need time. You have to understand our need. We think we know what is needed, but we have to do it in our own way. So far, I have no complaint on this score with the Arab leaders with whom I have talked. They seem to understand.

Since you spoke frankly, there is another question on which I would like to comment--oil. We understand that, when the US seemed slow or seemed to support Israel, certain measures were taken that indicated Arab displeasure. This we have understood.

Now that we have committed ourselves to a major effort for peace, it is inappropriate to punish the American people while their leaders are trying to help the Arabs. And if there are hardships in the US this winter, the public will turn against the Arabs and not against Israel.

Up to a certain point we have understood. We will show our good will by organizing a peace conference and organizing talks on military disengagement. But we are a great country with principles to protect. If the pressure continues beyond a certain point, we will stop doing anything.

I apologize for speaking with such frankness. But I promise you that I will make a major effort. By far my most difficult stop on this trip will be my next stop in Israel.

Frangie:
Our only fear is that the longstanding friendship and US-Arab ties would go out of business.

Kissinger:
You have to understand our act during the war. Why did we send arms to Israel? Once the war started, it was our decision that it should be ended as soon as possible and that as soon as it was over, we would make a major effort to bring about a settlement.

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During the war, the danger we saw was that countries armed by the Soviet Union would achieve a dominant position. The paradox is that it was necessary for the US to prevent a victory for Soviet arms as an American act so that after the war we could help to bring peace as an American act. Paradoxically, our act in aiding Israel saved Lebanon and Saudi Arabia who must be concerned with the Soviet condition in the area. If we can now bring about peace, the people will understand that this is also the result of American action.

Prime Minister:

This is what we want to happen.

[At this point, the group adjourned to lunch.]

Harold H. Saunders

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