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By WJ NARA Date 01/20/07

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EMBASSY OF THE
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

Jidda, Saudi Arabia

1973-9-10, Faisal, Kissinger, Protest

September 10, 1973

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OFFICIAL-INFORMAL

The Honorable Dr. Henry Kissinger
National Security Adviser
The White House
Washington, D.C.

Dear Dr. Kissinger:

I am taking the liberty of writing you both because I met you briefly in New Delhi in 1971 and because I have a particular interest and responsibility in the crises-area you have apparently chosen to place first on your agenda as Secretary of State. I might add that because of your background, both religious and national, but particularly the former, I personally have looked forward to the possibility that you would either become responsible for seeking further initiatives on the Middle East or become Secretary of State as you now will, giving you direct responsibility for this area and its unique twist of problems. I believe that, as the world's singlemost important power with the largest population of people of your faith, we should make plain our special status and proceed without apology from there. Besides, having been posted to Jerusalem, I know that the conscience of the Jew and particularly of the American Jew, is the singlemost favorable factor for a realistic peace in the area.

Without bothering to go into details of my own long involvement in the Middle East, I want to express three thoughts about the problem as it now stands. First, when we met in New Delhi in 1971 I asked if you thought that it might be necessary to have a "Tashkent" in the Middle East. You spent ten minutes arguing with yourself about it if I might say so, but came down on the side of the possibility of reaching a settlement with the aid of instead of in opposition to Moscow. Having witnessed

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from Cairo the build-up to the 1967 war, I can testify that it was a mix of U.S. indecisiveness (something less than a million tons of grain probably would have bought time and perhaps more from Nasser); of Soviet desire to disturb the situation and avoid a policy-defeat to client-states (Syria and the UAR) that were in deep trouble; and of course a certain amount of Israeli concern not to (in the words of Eban) wait like a rabbit for the snake to strike. I believe that the Soviets or a certain section of their governing apparatus, remain as committed now as then to radicalizing the situation whenever possible, even though their government official stance may be different. It is to subdue this tendency that we would have to negotiate with Moscow and I am unsure what we use for our quid in this case. But I am convinced that the removal of most of the Soviets from Cairo does not change the need to find a political formula that will involve the best tendencies of the Soviets in seeking peace in the Middle East. Even though they are less important today than in 1971, their ability to disrupt is great enough that we will have to contend with them if we do not enlist them. And I do not see a radical worsening of their over-all position here.

Second, I and many of us in the Foreign Service familiar with the area really believe that there is a need for recognizing and encouraging the economic and political independence of the moderates among the Palestinians. Economic development including the establishment of colleges and other infrastructure while the area is still occupied by Israel, is needed in the West Bank and Gaza. The tools we have are few, and perhaps only UNDP will be allowed to work there on such an economic development program. An economic development program for Palestinians in the Diaspora, especially in Lebanon, is also needed. Politically, peace negotiations with the Arab states without Palestinians is conceivable but I would doubt such negotiations would create a viable peace of any sort. There are moderates, mostly those who have more or less successfully lived under the Israeli occupation for six years, who must be given more of a role than as a mayor of an occupied city. Perhaps the re-introduction of some of the Palestinian leaders into a revitalized West Bank

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is the way to begin the process. There are several of them exiled in Amman and elsewhere. They would have to be acceptable to King Hussein, as well as to the Israelis, but they could form a nucleus for the missing Palestinian negotiators at a peace parley.

Third, I think that we must cease ambiguity at least in private and talk more and more substantively about implementing ideas and concepts that will lead to a sort of rough justice in the area. The viciousness on both sides will not abate until there is substantial argument and response mechanisms keyed to real policies that lead in positive directions: Better life and opportunity for the youth, freer atmosphere including travel and trade into and out of Palestine/Israel, and a guarantee that we and the Soviets will not countenance aggressive takeover by one minority of lands of another. This means above all a rapid wind-down of further settlement by the Israelis without at all prejudicing their control of the areas until a peace is arranged. And it will have to be arranged.

Today, if I were asking you a question, I would put it, "Do you think that it will be necessary to co-opt the Soviets (and perhaps one or two other powers) to bring about a step-by-step settlement in the Middle East?" I do not know the answer, but from here in Saudi Arabia, I do know the necessity of our demonstrating movement and forward progress towards negotiations. We can neither Arabize nor Israelize the whole of the M.E. and we shall have to take the onus of structuring the negotiations, both for the sake of their interests and of our own.

I wish you luck in the task and thought these few quite ordinary thoughts from one of "those Arabists in the State Department" might be welcomed.

Sincerely,



Eugene H. Bird
Counselor for Economic
and Political Affairs

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