

WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

Authority SA/2958

By NARA Date 4/10/8

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MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

PARTICIPANTS:

Anwar al-Sadat, President of the Arab Republic of Egypt
Ismail Fahmi, Minister of Foreign Affairs
Maj. General Mohammed Abdel Ghany el-Gamasy, Egyptian Chief of Staff

Henry A. Kissinger, Secretary of State
Ambassador Ellsworth Bunker, Ambassador-at-Large, Head of U. S. Delegation to Geneva Peace Conference
Joseph J. Sisco, Assistant Secretary for Near Eastern and South Asian Affairs
Peter W. Rodman, NSC Staff

DATE AND TIME:

Monday, January 14, 1974
10:30 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.

PLACE:

The President's House
Aswan, Egypt

[Secretary Kissinger and President Sadat conferred privately from about 10:30 to 10:45 a.m., discussing a map which the Secretary had carried with him from Israel. About about 10:45, General Gamasy was summoned to join the discussion. At 11:15 a.m., Ambassador Bunker, Assistant Secretary Sisco, and Peter Rodman were brought into the meeting.]

Secretary Kissinger: Sisco was up until 4:00 a.m. Saturday night. We did it in turns. I started at 7:30.

President Sadat: They said in the papers that a working committee was set up [between the U.S. and Israel].

Secretary Kissinger: Yes, working groups.

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(Kissinger)
1974-1-14
Sadat, Kissinger Meeting

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[Photographers were admitted, for a brief photo opportunity.]

Secretary Kissinger: I told the press that by tonight we would know whether it was a Kissinger plan or a Sisco plan. [Laughter]

Minister Fahmi: It depends on its success. [Laughter]

I told Joe that if it is a Joe plan, we'd send him to the Valley of the Queens. We'd preserve him.

Secretary Kissinger: Why preserve him? [Laughter]

I have presented to the President the evolution of my knowledge of Israeli thinking and also the political situation in Israel as we see it -- which is a divided Cabinet trying to form a new Cabinet, in which factions have this idea or that idea but it is difficult to get together. We insisted, on this visit, that there had to be a plan, and that they couldn't play the game with us of offering models and then taking them back.

First they suggested to replace Israeli forces with UN forces -- which I rejected. Then I showed the President a map they gave us Saturday, which was official -- they would leave the West Bank, you would stay in the Second and Third Army areas, and the UN takes this area, and there would be forward zones on both sides, and then the main lines. We rejected this, on the ground that the Egyptian presence on the Canal had to be unbroken and I couldn't face President Sadat with this proposal. Also, I didn't think it right that Egypt had to give up this territory. [See map at Tab A]

They wanted me to present this and come back to them. I said no.

Now their proposal is this: that there would be an Egyptian line, a UN line, and the Israeli line. This they say -- and I believe it -- is absolutely their final main line. They will not go off this road. I told the President, although I have no authority to do this, that I believe morally it is not possible or easy to ask Egypt to give up any territory they conquered. So I told the President I would be prepared to go back to Israel to ask that it go to Egypt, not the UN. [See map at Tab B]

So it is an unbroken line to the furthest extent of your present line plus the unbroken line.

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I have no authority but I will strongly urge it.

President Sadat: I told Dr. Kissinger to push the UN line forward in front of our line.

Secretary Kissinger: I am positive they won't go back further here.

President Sadat: The main line.

Secretary Kissinger: Yes. Your President wanted me to discuss it. I think -- and my associates were present at all my meetings -- that their original idea was like the Yariv idea, ten to twelve kilometers and no more. But I think they will go as far as this road. In the south I haven't discussed with them with the same intensity.

Here [the artillery line further back] is another line I haven't discussed with the President. They are willing to withdraw their artillery to this line if you are willing to withdraw your artillery.

President Sadat: From the East or West Bank?

Secretary Kissinger: From the East Bank.

Let's go through it all. In their view, in the Egyptian area on the East Bank they say there should be in the whole area two to three battalions. I told them this is impossible.

President Sadat: That's right.

Secretary Kissinger: I am a lousy negotiator on their behalf, but I want to tell you my idea of what is possible and what is not. The zone is with no tanks, no artillery; APC's are possible, and anti-tank guns are possible. They want this whole withdrawal to take three months -- then they said two months. I said it has to be shorter.

They have agreed to open the two roads to Suez City and the road to Kabrit within 48 hours of the first withdrawal. I promised you this.

President Sadat: Yes.

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Secretary Kissinger: Their basic theory is that the artillery of each side should be such that it does not cover more than the forward zone. Theirs would be back here, thirty kilometers.

They also are willing in this zone of thirty kilometers to have any limit of deployments that you are willing to have in your zone.

President Sadat: In the Western Bank.

Secretary Kissinger: Yes. So if you have, say, 300 tanks, they will do the same. They don't insist on it. But if you are willing.

They also want a line of 18 kilometers here with no artillery, then only 155 mm in the zone between 18-30 kilometers, and then 175 mm beyond the thirty kilometers.

If you want this, it can be done. I personally think it will be impossible to distinguish by photography between 155 and 175 mm, and I believe the practical consequence is that it means unrestricted artillery.

General Gamasy: Impossible.

Secretary Kissinger: In my judgment, yes.

President Sadat: Quite right.

Secretary Kissinger: They also want that anti-aircraft missiles be placed in such a way that they can't reach beyond the forward edge of your forward zone. Again I had a long argument with them about this, and they are willing to do the following -- which shows that the argument is heavily political. They don't mind that you can build emplacements for them as long as you don't move missiles in. But they say you can do it in 24 hours.

President Sadat: All our sites now are in this range on the West Bank. Beyond Qantara.

Secretary Kissinger: Your range is about 40 kilometers.

President Sadat: The maximum is 35 kilometers.

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Secretary Kissinger: You have better ones than the North Vietnamese, they don't hit much at the maximum range. Our experience in Vietnam is they are easy to avoid at the maximum range.

President Sadat: Quite right.

Secretary Kissinger: Now, I've presented to you their full plan, which caused us unbelievable anguish to produce -- even though you won't like it.

My judgment is this: I believe the number of battalions should be increased. I've already told them this is an unreasonable proposal. I don't know what they are willing to accept.

President Sadat: That depends on how many they put on the main line. I can't do it unless they tell me what they will have.

Secretary Kissinger: Their theory is your main line is the Canal and theirs is here. They will put symmetrical forces in their forward zones. I have told you there will be no tanks, no artillery in the forward zone. So this would be symmetrical.

Behind this main line they are willing, if you have only, say, 300 tanks between the main line and thirty kilometers, they'll do the same. We haven't discussed it all, but I believe it has to be a simple line.

President Sadat: It must be simplified at this stage.

Secretary Kissinger: I have given you the worst now.

Let me now go through it. I'll give you my assessment later.

President Sadat: Please.

Secretary Kissinger: There are seven essential conditions they said they had to have: [reads from memo at Tab C] The first is that the Agreement must renew the commitment to the ceasefire. I see no problem here.

President Sadat: No.

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Secretary Kissinger: The second is the blockade of Bab El-Mandeb. We have agreed on that.

The third is that if Egypt opens the Canal, Israeli ships must go through.

President Sadat: These are political issues!

Secretary Kissinger: I'm just telling you.

The fourth is that "all foreign troops and volunteers must be removed from Egypt."

President Sadat: Ridiculous.

Secretary Kissinger: Then there are "provisions for supervision, control and verification." That's automatic.

Then there are provisions I don't understand:

"The parties undertake not to interfere in any manner whatsoever, directly or indirectly, with scheduled or non-scheduled civil flights currently operating to or from territory of the other party."

Secretary Sisco: They told me something about interference with their flights to Africa.

Secretary Kissinger: My judgment is that these should be part of the peace negotiations.

President Sadat: It has to do with the boycott. It is purely political.

Secretary Kissinger: I'll tell you what I think is attainable and what is not attainable. So we can use this week efficiently.

If you agree, Mr. President.

President Sadat: Certainly; certainly. [The Egyptian side confers.] Can we form a working committee from both sides here?

Secretary Kissinger: Certainly.

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Would you alone now?

President Sadat: No, because we first have to agree, you and I, on the principles on which they will work.

Secretary Kissinger: I think we should form a working committee but we have to tell them what to do in this working committee.

President Sadat: Exactly.

[At 11:50 Kissinger and Sadat go out to discuss alone. While waiting, Gamasy, Fahmi, and Sisco go over the map:]

General Gamasy: Here is our main line now. We can't consider moving our main line here.

Minister Fahmi: Reciprocity is illogical. If they want us to put only 300 tanks here, it is defending the whole country. Their tanks aren't defending anything, and they are on Egyptian territory.

General Gamasy: [Opens up his own map] This is what we expected you would bring.

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Minister Fahmi: We can't keep only 300 tanks to defend against a shock attack. If they change their mind and try to kick us out of the East Bank.

General Gamasy: We have our anti-aircraft on our main line. There are very few artillery pieces of ours that can hit their forces in their forward zone. We have very few 122 mm pieces.

Ambassador Bunker: What about 130 mm? With 27-kilometer range?

General Gamasy: We have very few. And they have very few 175 mm that can hit our forces. The concept of their plan is to draw their forces back a little and behind this line to do whatever they like. And ask us to draw our main forces back.

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Minister Fahmi: To take our forces back from the East Bank. And all of this is on our own territory.

Assistant Secretary Sisco: I understand you reject symmetry.

Minister Fahmi: Politically what they are doing is redeploying their own forces and diminishing our defensive forces on our own territory, to guarantee their safety and diminish our safety. This is what they are doing.

Before we crossed the Canal we were much stronger. If we remove the rockets and keep only 300 tanks. . . We were much stronger even before October 6. We had 2,000 tanks.

General Gamasv: This [the Egyptian artillery line] is a very important line. Why do they have this?

Assistant Secretary Sisco: It's the parallel of their line here. They'd accept whatever limits you would accept.

Minister Fahmi: You see, they pick and choose. One time they ask for reciprocity and similarity; on other points they don't. They give themselves a security zone but not one for us. And they keep the main [north-south] road. The UN zone has no road in it; it's useless.

General Gamasv: That means the UN has to work inside our troops.

Then if we have two - three battalions, about 1,800 men, for the 180 kilometers, that means we can do better with police than with these three battalions.

* * *

Minister Fahmi: This shows what is in the back of their minds. This is meant to undo the effects of October 6, not only politically but militarily.

We have a special corps, of Nubians, to control the frontiers. They would be better than the 1,500 men they would give us. They want to reduce the Second and Third Armies to 1,500 men.

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