

1974-6-10, Rabin, Nixon, Visit

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THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

MEMORANDUM FOR: THE PRESIDENT

FROM: HENRY A. KISSINGER *(K)*

SUBJECT: Your Talks in Israel, June 16-17

You knew Rabin during his years in Washington, but you may find him much less responsive and less sure of himself now. During the long hours of negotiation on the Israeli-Syrian disengagement, he committed himself on nothing and rarely expressed a view. He showed no sense of responsibility for the future. The narrowness of his mandate will not lessen his uncertainty.

Your Objectives

- To reinforce Israeli confidence in the constancy of U. S. financial, military and political support of Israel's security.
- To enhance and sharpen Israeli awareness of the consequences of not maintaining the momentum of peace negotiations. (I have invited Rabin to Washington to assess where we are and to develop a common strategy for the future because it seems to me extremely important that the Israelis understand the dangers that potentially they face.)

What Prime Minister Rabin Wants

Israel's psyche was bruised badly by the October war and its aftermath. The onset of the war shocked Israelis out of their complacent assumptions that if they were only strong and stood firm, peace on their terms would eventually be theirs. Israelis now knew that the outcome of the 1967 war had not been a true reflection of the politico-military balance in the area. Their anxiety and disillusionment were translated into pressing demands for political

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change resulting in more internal political turmoil than Israel has ever known. The upshot, arising directly out of public disenchantment with two of Israel's most respected institutions, the military and the old leadership, was the unseating of Mrs. Meir's government, which could not survive the storm of protest unleashed by the interim report of a commission established to investigate the government's and military's handling of the war.

Now, for the first time since last fall, Israel has reason to emerge from its psychological depression. A new and younger leadership under Prime Minister Rabin has just taken the reins. The signing of a disengagement agreement with Syria gives Israel a modicum of peace on its borders for the first time since October. Your visit will contribute as well, being a consummate symbolic expression of the closeness of U.S.-Israel ties, so underscored in recent months by our military aid during and after the war and by the intimate consultation that has attended our peace efforts.

Prime Minister Rabin's government has only a bare majority in the Parliament. His apparent strategy is to establish his own image with the Israeli public in the coming months and then go to the polls at a propitious time in hopes of getting an enlarged mandate. For his political purposes your visit is most timely; it will serve to launch him dramatically in his new role on the national and international scene. Specifically, he will seek during this visit:

-- To obtain assurances of continued long-term U.S. financial, military and political support, in as specific terms as possible. Israel's requests for the extended future are substantial.

-- To persuade us to Israel's view of how the peace process should unfold. (Most likely: at a deliberate pace, next step Egypt, then Jordan, stress

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on building Israel-Arab confidence through intermediate agreements, scrupulously observed over as long a period as possible.)

-- To stress the hard points in the Israeli position: e.g. Israel must remain sovereign in Jerusalem; there is little more territorial give on the Golan Heights; Israel will be relentless in its war against terrorism; for religious/political reasons disengagement on the Jordan front will be difficult.

-- But also to emphasize Israel's complete commitment to the peace process based on true negotiations between the parties and non-imposition of terms by outside elements.

-- To obtain a U.S. undertaking to intervene again with the Soviet Union as well as Syria for facilitated emigration of Soviet and Syrian Jews.

US Strategy

During five weeks of negotiation, I often felt the frustration of seeing that the Israelis were not acting out of any long-term strategy, understanding of the real risks they face over the longer run, or recognition of what is necessary to maintain a strong US position in the Middle East, which serves their interests.

This frustration gives rise to the temptation to warn the Israelis that they cannot make a satellite of the US or count on unlimited US support in circumstances where they may not be giving full consideration of the risks the US faces as a result of their actions.

However, I found that the best tack is not to give voice to that frustration explicitly but rather to repeat over and over an objective analysis of the situation Israel would face if the negotiations failed. The list of consequences that I spelled out again and again included the likelihood of another war with Syria;

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the probability that the Soviets would be drawn in; the fact that Sadat would eventually have to support Syria and Israel's gains with Egypt would be lost; the reimposition of the oil embargo; the abertion of US diplomatic efforts and the return of negotiations to international forums where the US would have lost control and where Israel could expect strong pressures to return to its 1967 borders. In the end, the Israelis understood these risks, and it was their recognition of them that eventually convinced them it was essential to have a disengagement with Syria and that some compromise was necessary, even at the cost of some domestic criticism.

It seems to me, therefore, that the best position to take in your talks with Israeli leaders is to express your deep concern as a friend over the situation Israel and the US together will face if we cannot maintain the steady momentum of the present peace negotiations. This approach will permit you:

-- to capitalize on the unique support you have given Israel to assure the Israelis that continuing US support is available in the right circumstances, but at the same time

-- to leave the implication without threat that Israeli and US interests could diverge unless the Israelis cooperate in a strategy of helping the US retain diplomatic initiative, which serves both Israeli and US interests.

The analysis in brief would go something like this:

-- If we can maintain the steady pace of negotiations, we have a good chance of keeping the issues segmented so that Israel can deal with them one at a time and can draw out the negotiations over a prolonged period and therefore have the longest possible time in which to test Arab intentions. We also have a good chance of keeping the initiative in our hands and preventing Soviet, European, and other international

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pressures from coming together against Israel. The reimposition of the oil embargo would be unlikely, and we can use the time to build a closer relationship with the Arab nations to make it more difficult for them to turn against us and generate pressure on Israel.

-- If our negotiating effort fails, there seems no alternative to another war, the reimposition of the oil embargo, and the increase of pressure on Israel to withdraw immediately and completely to the 1967 borders. If the failure of negotiations, the increased danger of US-Soviet confrontation, and fuel shortages are seen to be the consequence of Israeli positions, there is serious question whether the extraordinary US aid of the past year could be continued.

-- If the pace of negotiations is to be maintained, Israel must contribute to keeping them going by framing a realistic next step with Egypt and with Jordan.

Bilateral Issues:

There are no major differences between us and Israel on bilateral issues. They are most grateful for our help and have said so publicly, often. Generally I do not believe in the light of our generosity to Israel this year that your visit needs to be, or ought to be, the occasion for the provision of new aid packages. As the peace process unfolds there will be, I am sure, occasion for further financial or military equipment incentives.

In our large and complex military supply relationship there are inevitably some items from time to time that we cannot provide Israel, or that we cannot provide as quickly as Israel would like. On major items, particularly aircraft and armor, we have been most forthcoming in recent months. I do not expect that Israeli interest in lesser arms items will be raised with you. If they are, I suggest that you hear them out and assure them that the most careful consideration will be given to their requests.

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In all likelihood, most Israeli stress will be placed on the need for long-term arms undertakings by the United States, not the least in order to give Israel confidence to make concessions for peace. Again I recommend a sympathetic posture but avoidance of any new commitments.

On economic assistance, the Israelis are well pleased with the almost \$2.7 billion in financial aid of all types we have provided this fiscal year, almost as much as the total of the previous twenty-five years. Preliminary soundings with me in Israel indicate Israel is now turning its attention to the future. The Israelis are speaking in terms of the United States covering all of Israel's dollar foreign exchange for arms purchases in this country for the next three years, at \$1 billion per year. Obviously, this would be a major undertaking (in normal years we provide \$300 million in arms sales credits annually) and we would have to consider it in the context of broad progress toward area peace, the lines of which are not yet clear.

Finally, the Israeli Embassy here has been probing for our thoughts on broadening the forms of our economic cooperation. Its representatives have mentioned specifically (a) a joint U.S.-Israel economic commission to direct economic interests between the two countries, and (b) assurances of long-term access through U.S. good offices to certain strategic raw materials. I think you should indicate our readiness to give any such ideas that are broached to you careful and sympathetic attention.

Points to Avoid:

-- There is no need at this point to commit ourselves to major new aid. The Israeli requests are so substantial that we will want to wait before responding until we see how the peace negotiations go. This will be manageable because the principal

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Israeli request is for the next fiscal year and requires no final answer now.

-- The Israelis pressed during the disengagement negotiation for a US commitment not to ask Israel to make further withdrawals from the Golan Heights. They may press at least for a commitment that we will not ask them to come down from the Heights. If you were to give such a commitment, it would leak to the Israeli media immediately, and our credibility with Syria would be destroyed, and Asad might well conclude that he has no choice but to go to war again.

-- Similarly, any commitment against a role for the Palestinians in negotiations would leak and undermine our position with the Syrians.

-- Any indication that we endorse the situation which Israel has unilaterally established in Jerusalem would equally undercut our position in key Arab capitals. It would also cause an outcry from major Christian capitals, as well as from the Vatican.

Your Talking Points

-- The American commitment to Israel's peace and security will continue to be as strong as it has been; it will not be sacrificed to the improvement of our relations with other countries and we will continue to give practical expression to it politically and through the provision of military and financial assistance.

-- We expect to work as closely as we have with Israel in the continuing peace negotiations. We will pursue our peace efforts, not in haste, but with a due sense of urgency. It is in Israel's interest to keep the negotiations moving at a steady pace. If the Arabs sense that the negotiating process is about to halt, pressures will mount for a return to Geneva or the UN.

-- Israel has shown itself realistic in negotiations to date. We count on a continuation of

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this disposition. We remain committed to the step-by-step approach. This permits Israel to deal with only so much as it can manage politically at a given time and to allow for time to test Arab intentions by observing adherence to agreements already concluded.

-- We must keep constantly in mind the consequences if present negotiations falter. While a renewal of war is less likely as a result of the two disengagement agreements, the probability of war would increase. The reimposition of the oil embargo would become an active possibility. The US would lose its ability to fend off international pressures on Israel.

-- It is crucial that the US and Israel together develop a long-term strategy so as to maintain the steady pace of negotiations. Prime Minister Rabin is welcome in Washington for such discussions.

-- There are two possibilities for a next diplomatic step, one on the Jordanian front and the other a second Egyptian-Israeli agreement. We assume another step with Egypt would be easier for Israel. However, some move soon with Jordan is essential if Israel is to avoid being left to negotiate with Arafat.

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