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By WMA NARA Date 3/3/98

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SECRETARY'S STAFF MEETING

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 23, 1973 - 4:35 P.M.

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P R O C E E D I N G S

SECRETARY KISSINGER: I thought I would bring you up to date briefly on what has happened -- because the Middle East crisis is something in which the Department played a principal role and in which its members acquitted themselves extraordinarily well.

So I wanted to talk to you about the strategy, what has happened and where we now stand.

When the war broke out, the first time I heard about the imminence of the war was when Joe Sisco woke me up at six o'clock on Saturday morning, October 6, and told us that the Israelis believed that a war might be imminent and to use our influence to get it stopped.

I mention this because there have been many stories that we prevented a pre-emptive attack by the Israelis and that their setbacks are due to our urging them not to engage in a pre-emptive attack. This is ^{JUST NOT TRUE} [total nonsense.] We did not urge them not to engage in a pre-emptive attack because we didn't believe that a war was coming. And we had no reason to tell them this. In fact, we can make a case for the proposition that we were more concerned about war than the Israelis were.

On the Sunday before the war started, I had ^{THE ISRAELI AMBASSADOR} [Dinitz] in here. (And that was at a time when the Department

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was not yet equipped for weekend work.] [But I had Dinitz in here] and I asked him what he thought. He assured me that there was no possibility of an attack. And I was sufficiently uneasy about it to ask for intelligence estimates, producing a massive row between CIA and INR as to who was entitled to produce intelligence estimates for the Secretary.] [We got one estimate for the Secretary and another one for the Assistant to the President.] Both ~~assessments~~ [of which, however,] agreed on the proposition that an Arab attack was highly improbable. These intelligence reports were confirmed during the week. And indeed the morning of the attack, the President's daily brief, intelligence brief, still pointed out that there was no possibility of an attack.

For all these reasons, we had no incentive in the world to tell anyone not to engage in a pre-emptive attack.

When I saw Eban on Thursday afternoon, ^{THAT WEEK} he explained to me at great length that there was no real need for a peace initiative, which I had urged on him, because the military situation was absolutely stable and could not be changed, and politically there was nothing to be gained by a peace offensive.

I don't want to go into great detail, except to

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point out that the only reason I mention this is because as the myth develops, it would be that our influence prevented the Israelis from forestalling the attack by a pre-emptive move. Secondly, the most important thing to remember is that whatever we had advised them, and even if they had made a pre-emptive attack, it would not have changed the outcome in any sense. And this is what the Israelis have to understand in the diplomacy after this war. It would not have changed the outcome, because a new element in the situation has been the combination -- I think it is safe to say that the Arabs have learned more from the war in '67 than the Israelis did.

The Israelis continue to adopt their tactics of '67. The Arabs developed tactics to thwart the tactics of '67. And there are three new elements in the Arab strategy.

One -- the heavy reliance on SAM's which negated to a considerable extent the Israeli air force. The heavy reliance on anti-tank weapons, which exacted an exorbitant toll of Israeli tanks. And the better leadership and morale of the Arab forces, in which they would not surrender once they were surrounded. In fact, the Arabs used the same tactics which were eventually used

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to thwart the German thrusts in World War II, and the Israelis used exactly the same strategy as the Germans used, which is to use airplanes as artillery, to demoralize the enemy by lightening thrusts, which works beautifully as long as a surrounded enemy surrenders; it does not work well when the surrounded enemy does not surrender, and therefore exposes the fact that you are really operating with rather tenuous lines of communication and not very strong forces.

Therefore, even if the Israelis had launched a pre-emptive attack, the outcome of the initial battles would have been substantially the same.

For the first few days, the Israeli effort had to be expended on the SAM sites, and until the SAM's were suppressed, their classic pre-emptive weapon, the airplane, suffered losses that were exorbitant in relation to the objectives that could be achieved in any one day. This was the massive change in the situation, and a change which will affect in my view the entire post-war period.

[Now, we had here a little crisis group, composed of Ken Rush, Joe Sisco, David Popper, ^{Tom} (Don) Pickering and ^{Lo} Terry Eagleberger, with others brought in from time to time.

In addition, we had daily meetings on an interdepartmental

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basis with Bob McCloskey as part of this group -- with WASAG.]

From the beginning, our problem was this.

We could not tolerate an Israeli defeat. Apart from any sentimental attachment that may have existed to Israel and apart from any historic ties, the judgment was that if another American-armed country were defeated by Soviet-armed countries, the inevitable lessons that anybody around the world would have to draw is to rely increasingly on the Soviet Union. Secondly, it would undermine the position in the Middle East, even in countries that formerly were not ^{ally} formerly opposing us, such as ^{Arabia} the Saudis, ^{and} Jordan, if the radical Arab states supported by the Soviet Union scored a great victory over the Israelis.

On the other hand, we could not make our policy hostage to the Israelis, because our interests, while parallel in respect to that I have outlined, are not identical in the overall term^s. From an Israeli point of view, it is no disaster to have the whole Arab world radicalized and anti-American, because this guarantees our continued support. From an American point of view, it is a disaster. And therefore throughout we went to extreme lengths to stay in close touch with all the key Arab participants and

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exchanged, in the totality, as many messages with the Arabs as we did with the Israelis, and ^{we} on the whole _^ kept the anti-Americanism in the Arab world, even though this war lasted much longer than the war in 1967, to a much lesser proportion than was the case in 1967.

And third was our relationship with the Soviet Union, and other great powers; the Europeans, Chinese.

But of the great powers, the key one was the Soviet Union.

The Europeans behaved ^{badly} [like jackals.] Their behavior was a [total] disgrace. They did everything to egg on the Arabs. They gave us no support when we needed it. They proclaimed loudly that the Russians had double-crossed us in the declarations of principals we had signed -- forgetting that the declarations of principals we had signed followed similar declarations of principals each one of them had signed with the Soviet Union. And none of them seemed prepared to invoke their own declarations of principals. They were ready enough for us to give up detente on the grounds of what had been done to us by the Russians. [Nor were] ^{were not} they willing to have any joint moves in the United Nations. And when this is over, as it will be in a few days, it is absolutely imperative for us [-- George and Win --] to assess just where we are going in our relationship

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with the European allies -- what exactly it means to talk about the indissolubility of our interests with respect to defense and the total indivisibility of our interests in every other respect that may come up.

I don't want to prejudge it, but I think it is an issue that can no longer be evaded.

The Chinese, I think, had only one interest in the situation, which was that the Soviets ^{lose,} get creamed, both militarily and politically. And while they made minimum noises of support for the Arabs, they certainly did not object to any of the military moves they made.

So that leaves us with the Soviets.

Now, it has been a moving experience to see ^{commentators} Joe Kraft realize the aggressiveness of the Soviet Union, which had been neglected by this Administration, considering that for years we had been castigated by many of those who wanted to end detente for conducting the cold war beyond all reason. And we had many volunteers who wanted us to end detente and proclaim that the Soviet Union had started this.

Our judgment is -- I don't know whether Ray Cline will disagree with this -- that the Soviets did not start it, but they became aware -- they started it in the sense perhaps of having given equipment. But they must have

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shared our judgment that the Israelis were so militarily preponderant, that no amount of equipment they could give to the Arabs would do more than enable them to give a slightly better account of themselves.

But I have never seen a military estimate by anybody, prior to the war, which indicated that the Arabs had any chance whatever of defeating the Israelis or of even staving off their own defeat for anything longer than six days.

There is no reason to believe that the Soviets made a different estimate.

Our estimate is that the Soviets became aware of it around October 3--maybe a little earlier. But it gave them a massive problem, because if they told us and the Israelis ^{then} pre-empted, [then] they would not only have prevented the war, but they would have brought about the defeat of their friends. They evacuated some of their personnel, ^{most of} their personnel from Egypt. And they played militarily a rather neutral role until they started the airlift.

Now, then, what about the behavior during military operations?

First, they stayed conspicuously remote from any attack on the United States. Neither the Soviet

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press nor their UN behavior was in any way directed against the United States. And they could have made life extremely -- certainly much more difficult had they gone into an all-out onslaught.

Secondly, their military units did not maneuver as provocatively as they did in 1967. ^P Thirdly, they did engage in a massive airlift into the Middle East.

For this you can have two explanations. Either that they expected their clients to lose and didn't want to be blamed for the loss, and poured in equipment which they thought probably didn't make any difference; or that they wanted to keep the war going. You can choose your own interpretation. The first is as logical as the second -- that they thought their clients were going to lose, but that they did not want to be blamed for the defeat, and that they wanted to salvage what they could from the wreckage by having proved themselves loyal as allies, not only to the Arabs, but to other countries that relied on them.

I think of some of the considerations that we went through when we thought Israel was on the downgrade.

This is not implausible.

Anyway, no matter what is said in the press, we did not fail to do anything that we should have done or

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that we wanted to do because of detente.

What we wanted to do was use the detente as a means of using super-power influence to calm the situation. To some extent it was achieved even during the first week at the United Nations. During the first week, we engaged in a complex maneuver to try to get a cease-fire at the end of the first week. It is true that the Soviet eagerness to bring about a cease-fire was not as intense when they thought their side was winning ^{or} [than] it grew ^{to be} later.

We pursued this until Saturday of the first week -- that is to say until October 13. On October 13 it was clear that the Soviets could not deliver the Egyptians to what was in effect a cease-fire in place, and to which we had obtained Israeli acquiescence, more or less. When that occurred we felt we had no choice except to go another route, namely to prove to the Soviets that we could match strategically anything they could put in the Middle East, and that we could put it into more capable hands. And that therefore the longer the war would go on, the more likely would be a situation in which they would have to ask for a cease-fire rather than we. And this is [the] reason why we started the airlift on Saturday. It is the principal reason why we started the airlift on October 13.

Having failed to bring the war to a conclusion by

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diplomatic methods, we concluded that the only way to end the war would be to demonstrate to the Soviets and to the Arabs that the war could not be won by military methods.

Our calculation was that whatever price we would pay with the Arabs would be increased if the war went on for an appreciable length of time. Since we could not permit Israel to lose, which is the only thing that would satisfy the Arabs, it was best to move massively and rapidly.

And this is what we did.

All during this period -- I won't go into the details of diplomatic exchanges, but we were literally in daily touch with the principal Arab countries, except Syria; in frequent touch with the Soviet Union; in touch enough with the Chinese so that they knew what was going on. I suspect we were their ^{PRC's} only source of information. And in sporadic touch with the Europeans to beat off occasional [jackal] forays, to see whether they could pick up any loose pieces that might be lying around, which were never pressed very energetically.

The diplomacy began to -- well, it never really ended, because on Monday night the Soviets tried out a proposal on us -- Sunday night, Monday morning.

MR. SISCO: You called me midnight Sunday.

SECRETARY KISSINGER: Sunday night they tried out

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a proposal on us which created a tentative link between the political and military provisions. And we continued this during the rest of the week.

Thursday night the Soviets put this into specific form. Friday they asked me to go to Moscow. And we felt that since the military situation had turned drastically, and since we also believed that the Russians were on the verge of having to make the same fundamental decision we thought we might have to make the week before -- what to do in the face of a complete collapse of their clients -- we thought this was the strategic moment for moving fast. Until then, we had moved, shall we say, deliberately, and not speeded up any diplomatic exchange.

We have just come back from two days in the Soviet Union, and you have all seen the UN resolution.

Now, let me say a word about the UN resolution.

First of all, it was significant that it was introduced by the United States and the Soviet Union jointly, so that by not ripping our relationship with the Soviet Union we could, when the strategic moment arose, move very rapidly to a conclusion.

We have never maintained -- this Administration least of all -- that we relied on good personal relations

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with the Soviet leaders. We have never believed that we could substitute charm for reality. All we have said is that we could add into the calculations of reality, as the Soviet leaders saw it, an element of their relationship with the United States to be used when objective conditions permitted it. And objective conditions permitted it on Saturday and Sunday.

And I believe we have established a relationship which enabled us to move faster and at a higher level than would have otherwise been the case.

Now, what is the ssence of the resolution?

It establishes a cease-fire in place. The cease-fire in place means in effect, simply looked at strategically, that the Israelis will wind up with more territory than they possessed at the beginning of the war, and that the Arabs, who were not our principal antagonists ^{with less} -- but the Soviets made no strategic gain, because with the Israelis now on both sides of the Canal, it is still impossible to open ^{it,} [the Canal.]

Secondly, we affirmed Security Council Resolution 242 which has been on the books since 1967 -- and while it asks for the immediate implementation, this is impossible even with good will, since no one knows, except Joe Sisco, what 242 means. (Laughter)

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[MR. SISCO: And I won't tell. (Laughter)]

SECRETARY KISSINGER:] That is like what Palmerson said about the Schleswig-Holstein question -- that only three people ever understood it, and one was dead, the other was in an insane asylum, and he was the third, and he had forgotten. [it.]

And the third, which is the most significant, is that for twenty-five years the Middle East issue has been hung up on the problem that the Arabs would not negotiate with the Israelis. Here we have a Security Council resolution asking for direct negotiations between the Arabs and the Israelis under appropriate auspices. The auspices, as we interpret it, and as we have agreed with the Soviets, will almost certainly be U.S.-Soviet, assuming this is acceptable to the other parties -- though we do not want this generally put out until it emerges from the diplomacy that will develop.

Now, the essence of a good settlement is that everybody can feel he has gained something. And you cannot conduct a permanent relationship on the basis of unconditional surrender.

What the Arabs gained out of this is respectability. They did not surrender. They fought effectively. And while they were defeated, they were not crushed.

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What the Arabs further gained out of it is undoubtedly ^{that} they will interpret the Security Council Resolution 242 to mean that Israel has to return to its '67 boundaries. But they have claimed that ever since 1967. So this is not new.

But what they certainly should gain out of it is a realization on the part of the Israelis that this cockiness of supremacy is no longer possible; that like other countries in history, they now have to depend on a combination of security and diplomacy to achieve their security.

What Israel gained out of it is first that they avoided, literally avoided the precipice. And secondly that they won another war, though at heavy cost. That they gained recognition by the Arabs of direct negotiations. And that our support was validated.

What the Soviet Union gained out of it is largely negative. The Soviet Union cut its losses. I think basically what happened with the Soviet Union is that for the third time since 1953 they have lost much of the equipment they put into the Arab world. They were once again defeated. And their major contribution to their allies cause was to cut the extent of the disaster, but not really to gain them anything very positive.

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So that puts us into a position where if we behave wisely and with discipline in the months ahead, we are really in a central position.

The Israelis have learned that their original idea that they could use the stockpiled equipment that they had from us to score a big victory over the Arabs if we pressed them too hard is no longer possible. If they get into another war, they must do it with our enthusiastic backing or they are lost. And [therefore] the Israelis, ^{will come to} [after they] recover from the enormous shock of the tremendous casualties they have suffered -- their total casualties are around 6,000, with about 2,000 dead, which if you adjust it to the American scale is something like 600,000 casualties in two weeks -- that is World War I type casualties. So it will take them a couple or three weeks to absorb the impact of what has happened to them.

As far as Israel is concerned, we have to be taken even more seriously than we have been in the past. And our insistence on a more politically oriented policy cannot go unheeded.

As far as the Arabs are concerned, the situation seems to me reasonably simple. We are besieged now with oil company executives who tell us that we have

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thrown away everything in the Arab world. [They will probably manage to do it. But if they don't succeed in throwing everything away -- the fact of the matter is that ^{what} any rational Arab leader now has to (do) know (that) whether he hates us, loves us, despises us, ^{is} there is no way around us. If they want a settlement in the Middle East, it has to come through us. And that incidentally is the theme that I want us to adopt in a very friendly and conciliatory fashion; that it does not pay to antagonize us, that we cannot be pressured into doing things we do not want to do. So they better get us to want to do them.

And we absolutely will not apologize for our actions. We will tell them that we are prepared to make a major contribution to remove the conditions that produced this war; that we do not maintain that the conditions that produced this war are tolerable for the Arabs. But we will do it as an act of policy and not because somebody is blackmailing us. And this is how we handled at least the serious ones of them during this whole period, and why Egypt never launched a propaganda campaign during this whole period -- because we told them the basic fact of the matter is that they would need us in the post-war diplomacy, and we would not play if they

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behaved in such a way.

So I think we now have a good opportunity to try to move towards a fundamental settlement. We have the forum which was established by the Security Council resolution. We have the reality which was established by the war. And I hope we can now in this building develop a policy, as I am sure we can -- because I want to repeat again what I said at the beginning; that the behavior of the people, the performance of the people who worked on this was superlative.

When our first plan went awry, the group stayed up all night, from the 13th to the 14th, and wrote out a new strategy, which we then literally followed the rest of the way. It was one of the situations where for good or ill we can claim what we designed more or less came to pass.

(October 23)
Today, there is a little flap because -- who knows who started it, but the Israelis grabbed another -- obviously they grabbed some more territory, because it is the Arabs and the Soviets who are ^{pushing} [screaming] for another Security Council resolution. The Security Council is meeting now. And there will be another joint U.S.-Soviet resolution calling for ^{one,} an immediate cease-fire, ^{two,} a return to the positions which existed when the cease-fire went into

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effect, ~~And~~ and thirdly, the establishment of UN observers. We have no excessive expectation that it is possible to determine where the lines were when the cease-fire went into effect. So that one and three are the most important ones.

But the major thing to remember is that (I think) the events of the last two weeks have been on the whole a major success for the United States. And not only a success for the United States, ~~they~~ they were a success for the policy that had preceded it, because without the close relationship with the Soviet Union, this thing could have easily escalated. Not that I am saying the Soviet Union behaved in a friendly fashion, but that there was enough in that relationship to moderate them at critical points. Paradoxically, we are in a better long-term position in the Arab world than we had been before this started. And finally, we have a better position to bring about a permanent settlement than before.

And I think it also shows what we can do here if we think conceptually and lay out where we want to go, and then get all the resources that exist here all working together, as I believe was essentially done, in this crisis.

Joe, do you want to add anything?

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MR. SISCO: Just a very short postscript, Mr. Secretary. I had only been to the Soviet Union once before. That was in 1969. And after sitting there with Brezhnev for eight or nine hours, whatever it was we had, I carried away one impression very, very strongly. I knew that the Soviets attached importance to detente, but I think in these meetings that we had, the strength of that view even surprised me. It just comes out in every possible way.

[SECRETARY KISSINGER: And he didn't even kiss me on the mouth as he did in Camp David. You didn't see it in full flight. (Laughter)

[MR. SISCO: Well, I just want to say the leadership that you have given to this is very impressive indeed, Mr. Secretary, and I think I am in a very good position to say this.

[SECRETARY KISSINGER: Any questions? I know, Ken, you don't talk in my presence. (Laughter) You run your own meetings.

MR. RUSH: I would like to say that while on the one hand this does show what the State Department can do, the other side of the coin is it shows also what can be done when you and the State Department work

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very closely together. I should like to express my very high degree of satisfaction at the results that were achieved under your leadership in this very important situation.

SECRETARY KISSINGER: Also the interdepartmental process [after a week of sabotage by some of the departments] worked extremely well.

Are there any questions?

Ray, what is your assessment?

MR. CLINE: The same as yours, Mr. Secretary.

But since --

SECRETARY KISSINGER: You will go far. (Laughter)

MR. CLINE: Since you commented on the intelligence support you got, I would like to make one observation about the intelligence. Our difficulty was partly that we were brainwashed by the Israelis, who brainwashed themselves, I think, in the same way. But much more important, we really did not have an adequate intelligence base to work on, as to what was going on day by day in the Middle East.

I think our strategic framework was all right. But we did not have very good intelligence, and we didn't have nearly as much as the Russians had. And I think that is a very serious thing for the future. They had a great deal more to go on than we did.

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SECRETARY KISSINGER: I have asked everyone who was on the Middle East Task Force --we never called it that-- people who met twice a day in my office, and I will ask anybody else who did something, who saw enough of the operation to have an opinion about it, to write a critique of, first, what was done well, and second, what was done badly; and thirdly, apart from whether what was done well or badly, what lessons we can learn from it to improve the operations of the Department as well as the operations of the government.

And finally, I would appreciate people's judgment if they think we got everything out of that crisis that we should have, and if in a few more days we could have come out even better.

MR. CLINE: There is no substitute for good information, as you know.

SECRETARY KISSINGER: And the trick is to end these things in time, before one of the great powers feels it has to push in another batch of chips.

George.

MR. ALDRICH: Mr. Secretary, I was curious as to what is really the forum for the follow-on negotiations. Is it the UN, or U.S.-Soviet?

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SECRETARY KISSINGER: Probably U.S.-Soviet.

The UN is not a good forum for us, nor for the Israelis.

But not even for us.

MR. NEWSOM: Mr. Secretary, do you have any thoughts at the moment on what we do about the Arab oil boycott? My own feeling is that here is a very good chance to show them that there is a common interest --

SECRETARY KISSINGER: We will break it. We will not provide auspices for the negotiations until they end it.

MR. NEWSOM: I think the question of their reliability as suppliers can also be emphasized to them.

SECRETARY KISSINGER: We will not participate in any joint auspices until the oil boycott ends.

MR. NEWSOM: Is this being made clear?

SECRETARY KISSINGER: It will be. It has not been made clear yet. We want to get the war ended first. I don't think they will go through with it, not under these conditions. It may come back next year. And also we will start an emergency oil program in this country, [which is more symbolic than substantive.

Any other questions?

Good. Thank you.]

(Whereupon at 5:00 p.m. the meeting was ended.)

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