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MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

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MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

PARTICIPANTS: Ardeshir Zahedi, Ambassador of Iran
Henry A. Kissinger, Assistant to the President
for National Security Affairs
Peter W. Rodman, NSC Staff

DATE AND TIME: Monday, August 13, 1973
3:10 - 3:40 p.m.

PLACE: Dr. Kissinger's Office
The White House

Kissinger: Are you rested up after your invasion?

Ambassador Zahedi: I wanted for the record to thank you for the visit, not only on behalf of the Shah but also for the Crown Prince and Her Majesty.

Dr. Kissinger: I think it was a good trip. We had good talks.

Ambassador Zahedi: It was the first trip outside of Persia for the Crown Prince. They took him to Disney World, Cypress Gardens, and Cape Kennedy.

Dr. Kissinger: When did His Majesty accede to the throne?

Ambassador Zahedi: In 1940. He was nineteen years old.

Dr. Kissinger: He is one of the ablest leaders. I'm not just saying that.

In 1969 I called on him at your predecessor's Embassy. He developed his ideas on the oil situation. All of our experts said he was wrong. It turned out that all our experts were crazy and he was right.

Ambassador Zahedi: In 1961 I remember he told President Kennedy that you would need twice as much oil in the 1970's. Our relations have always been good.

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Dr. Kissinger: You can be sure we follow up everything we promise. We are waiting to hear from him on some things.

Ambassador Zahedi: I called you about what we call the LSC personnel.

Dr. Kissinger: Did they give you that stupid letter?

Ambassador Zahedi: Yes.

Dr. Kissinger: [calls Scowcroft] Brent, tell the Pentagon to knock it off. [to Zahedi:] This is just a draft of an agreement. You can still tell us what your objections are.

Ambassador Zahedi: In one place it says "from time to time." Our objection is from top to bottom! What does it mean, "time to time?" "Hostile action in or over Iran, where there is riot, insurrection, civil war" -- This is contrary to the spirit of the talks with the Shah, I think it was drafted before he came.

Dr. Kissinger: It's stupidly drafted. It means that if there are riots while the Russians invade you can't use them!

Let's see if we can get a simpler agreement drafted.

Ambassador Zahedi: There was a major agreement in Tehran.

Dr. Kissinger: These are the excerpts you have trouble with. I understand. I'll get you something in a week. Let's get them to tone it down.

Ambassador Zahedi: You also have the information that I'm seeing your friend on the 25th.

Dr. Kissinger: Yes. And I have given you something you can tell him. [Tab A] I want to eliminate the last sentence.

[Zahedi reads it]

Dr. Kissinger: Are you coming back here from Geneva?

Ambassador Zahedi: I would send this to him, then I can talk with His Majesty on it.

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Dr. Kissinger: I thought we wouldn't send a cable on it.

Ambassador Zahedi: No cable. We would send a messenger especially to get it. And it's only between His Majesty and myself. No one else on our side is involved.

Dr. Kissinger: We don't need the last sentence. [Sentence reading "Egypt should try to develop a proposal that Israel cannot refuse," is deleted.]

Ambassador Zahedi: "We would urge..."

Dr. Kissinger: That is all right.

Ambassador Zahedi: Do you think the present situation in Lebanon will have an effect on it?

Dr. Kissinger: No, because something like this will happen all the time. As I told the Shah, for four years people asked us about Vietnam: Will you bring pressure on South Vietnam? It was a senseless question, because there was nothing to bring pressure about. It is the same with Israel -- to ask for total withdrawal as a precondition for negotiations....

Ambassador Zahedi: Is that your only problem?

Dr. Kissinger: It is also senseless for a country which lost a war to demand it as a precondition. It could be the end result, but as a precondition...

Ambassador Zahedi: I've been involved with this for six years, in the United Nations and lately. I've talked with Eban. Many times I've convinced him, but either he couldn't convince his people, or he changed his mind. In 1969 when the Rogers Plan came out, I persuaded the Egyptians not to attack it.

Many times they say they will accept but then change their mind.

Dr. Kissinger: No question. The Israelis will be tough. They don't want to accept anything. But I think they must have a spy in Egypt. If they withdraw twenty miles, there is no line as defensible -- I mean not militarily, but politically and intellectually -- as the present one. Our interest is to get a process started, to get a precise issue we can support the Arabs on.

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Ambassador Zahedi: But they have become so suspicious. Hafez Ismail is a friend of mine.

Dr. Kissinger: I like him. He is a nice person.

Ambassador Zahedi: He is a reasonable person.

Dr. Kissinger: Tell him I expressed very high personal and professional regard for him.

Ambassador Zahedi: Yes, I will. I think the Israelis are making a serious mistake. I think time is not on their side.

Dr. Kissinger: Yes.

Ambassador Zahedi: I told Eban: Look at the opinion change on Vietnam. On the energy crisis: You would never have thought of what Mobil Oil would say and what Standard would say to their stockholders.

Dr. Kissinger: I agree. But the oil companies are stupid. You know that. You have dealt with them. Stupidity is not an Iranian problem! But it is not a good idea to get the Saudis involved in the Arab-Israeli dispute. It is better to keep it among the Israelis, Egyptians, Syrians, and Jordanians. Don't you agree?

Ambassador Zahedi: Yes, yes. As with Nasser, they become slaves of what they have said.

Dr. Kissinger: It is not in the interests of the Saudis.

Ambassador Zahedi: That's what I tell him.

Dr. Kissinger: No conceivable solution is going to be all that acceptable to the Arab governments. Why not let the Egyptians take the heat?

Ambassador Zahedi: It won't be easy for Anwar Sadat.

Dr. Kissinger: We are willing to be helpful. And we recognize we are going to have difficulties with Israel. We are willing to run that risk, but first we have got to have a workable proposition. What Sisco is doing is absurd -- he asked the Israelis on Israeli T.V. to be "flexible." Then they come up with an unacceptable proposition and we have shot our wad.

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Ambassador Zahedi: We've got to have peace there.

Dr. Kissinger: I don't want to get personally involved. I'll be the first one to be assassinated by both the Jews and the Arabs!

Ambassador Zahedi: I told His Majesty once that everyone wanted you in but you didn't.

Dr. Kissinger: I'll get involved but only if it's worth it.

Ambassador Zahedi: But you have to. It's the only way.

Dr. Kissinger: But I can't if Ismail just recites positions I can read in the newspaper.

Ambassador Zahedi: I haven't seen Ismail for many months. Let's see. But they fear that if they move, the whole thing shifts.

Dr. Kissinger: I may not be all that easy to negotiate with, but every promise I make I keep. The problem now is I have nothing I can deliver.

How are you going to communicate with us?

Ambassador Zahedi: I have to see you. I leave Tuesday or Thursday next week to see him in Switzerland. Either I will write to you or I will see you.

Dr. Kissinger: I'll be on the West Coast until the 3rd or 4th of September, so you will have to come out there.

Ambassador Zahedi: It is no problem.

I'll see Bhutto. You can trust him. I know him.

Dr. Kissinger: I understand there is lots of anti-Indian feeling in Bangladesh now.

Ambassador Zahedi: Yes. Like in Yemen with the Egyptians.

Dr. Kissinger: I've held all along that the worst mistake India made was to make Bangladesh an independent state, as a protectorate of India. It would have been better off with it as an autonomous entity in Pakistan.

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Ambassador Zahedi: I told that to Mujib. I told that to Bill Rogers, too.

Dr. Kissinger: Good. So you'll be in touch with me.

Ambassador Zahedi: This is not too important, but it came up. I have already talked with the State Department on it: We had an agreement with the U.S. about 600,000 tons of wheat, 100,000 tons of barley and 70,000 tons of soybeans. Since we have an agreement, I thought we should not be affected. State is handling it. But if there is any problem, I will let you know.

Dr. Kissinger: I'll intervene.

Ambassador Zahedi: If necessary.

[The meeting then ended at 3:40 p.m.]

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1. In his meetings in Washington, His Imperial Majesty stressed the importance of an Arab-Israeli settlement and of the US taking a more balanced position. In the course of his discussions, he concluded that the US recognizes very clearly that movement toward a settlement is in the US interest.

2. The Nixon Administration's problem is to put itself in a position where it can operate effectively. Until now, the Administration's experience with taking public initiatives has been that it is then attacked by all sides for its position and movement is stalled. It is determined to avoid that situation this time.

-- It has decided, therefore, that it must move quietly until enough understanding has been developed about how to proceed so that it is in a publicly defensible position.

-- This is the reason it has chosen not to take a different public posture at this time. Although doing so would ease the US position in the Arab countries in the short term, it would not produce practical results over the longer term.

3. The US feels that the longer the present situation continues, the harder it will be to change. On the other hand, any move from the present ceasefire lines will necessarily create a more fluid situation than the present one.

4. The Administration feels that present Egyptian policy is perpetuating the present situation. By asking for a commitment now to

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total withdrawal -- which no Israeli government will give at this point -- the Egyptian government is making it easy for the Israeli government to avoid a decision that would break the present deadlock and begin the process of withdrawal. The Administration is prepared to press for a fair overall settlement, but it has to be in a position to get a process started in which it can present propositions to the Government of Israel which cannot be easily rejected.

-- By segmenting the negotiations and moving a step at a time, the Administration feels a situation could be developed in which practical results could be achieved.

5. At the same time, the Administration is keenly aware of the need to keep any first step toward an overall settlement from creating a new situation that becomes frozen. It fully understands President Sadat's problems in this regard. The Administration's objective is obviously not just to produce a new deadlock, but to create a situation in which further movement toward an overall settlement is possible.

6. From His Majesty's talks in Washington:

-- We judge that the US is serious in wanting a settlement and is serious in trying to find a workable way of achieving one.

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-- Egypt is losing more by being frozen into the present situation than it would lose if it could begin to move the Israeli forces back.

-- We would urge greater tactical flexibility.