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THE WHITE HOUSE

PRESS CONFERENCE
of
HENRY A. KISSINGER
SECRETARY OF STATE

SALZBURG, AUSTRIA

11:55 A.M. EDT

MR. NESSEN: The two Presidents, of course, have given you their views of the meetings they held here. A number of you have asked for elaboration and further explanation of some of the points, so the Secretary of State has come down to do that.

After Dr. Kissinger has talked to you I will have perhaps three or four items in the way of schedule announcements to make.

SECRETARY KISSINGER: I need hardly say how much I have been looking forward to an opportunity to have the press conference in Salzburg. (Laughter) I have been rehearsing for it for a year.

The two Presidents have really stated their positions, and there is nothing I could add to those, but I thought it might be helpful to answer some questions. So within the limit -- yes?

Q Can you give us your reaction to the decision by the Israelis to thin out their forces east of the Canal, please?

SECRETARY KISSINGER: The question is to give my reaction to the decision of the Israelis to thin out their forces east of the Canal.

We think that that is a constructive move. It has clearly the intention of easing possible Egyptian concerns about Israeli artillery in range of the Canal, and while not decisive or no unilateral step can be a decisive step at this point, I think it is a helpful contribution to the process which the United States is strongly attempting to encourage in which both parties should make an effort to move towards peace.

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Q Mr. Secretary, how long have you known about this Israeli decision?

SECRETARY KISSINGER: Well, we have talked about this Israeli decision -- I mean, about this concept or about a concept like this -- previously. The actual decision we learned about this morning.

Yes?

Q Did the Egyptians indicate there was any change in their negotiating position since last March? And if there was, was there enough to encourage a resumption of a negotiation with Israel on a partial agreement?

SECRETARY KISSINGER: The purpose of these talks was not for the two heads of State to get into detailed negotiations on the issues of peace in the Middle East or on the issues of an interim agreement between Egypt and Israel. As I pointed out to a number of you previously, the intention of this meeting was to permit the two leaders an opportunity to look over all the various roads to peace that have so far been identified in the Middle East and to see which of them might be more promising or how to pursue those that were available.

I think the discussion proceeded from the assumption that if progress towards peace is to be made all parties must make a contribution, and in that sense I thought there was a positive spirit. It is too early to tell whether it permits a resumption of any particular negotiation because we must now talk to the Israeli Prime Minister and see whether his ideas coincide with those we have heard from the Egyptian President or whether there should be perhaps some American suggestions.

But the atmosphere was constructive; the attitude was constructive. And together with the Israeli move that was made today perhaps we are moving into a period where some momentum can be put behind peace efforts again.

Q Mr. Secretary, do you anticipate Egypt making some parallel confidence-building moves? And also, does the shift of Syrian forces to the Iraqi front have any bearing or depend in any way to signal Syrian interests in a peace effort with Israel?

SECRETARY KISSINGER: I believe that, of course, whether Egypt will make some response, it is too early to say. But in general, the Israeli announcement, as I understood it, was intended as a response to the Egyptian opening of the Suez Canal despite the suspension of the negotiations in March. So that maybe that concludes the sequence of moves.

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We have no confirmed reports about the shift of Syrian forces away from the Israeli frontier but it is very possible that if it did take place it is caused by reasons unrelated to the settlement issue, though it could have an effect on the settlement.

Q Mr. Secretary, could you be a little more precise on what form an American policy statement will now take after you have conferred with the Israeli Prime Minister? Will it be a general statement or will you lay out a specific set of recommendations?

SECRETARY KISSINGER: Well, as you know, we have always been reluctant to make specific recommendations unless we felt the parties were sufficiently close for these recommendations, to bridge the gap. Certainly, the President will state his general views at some point after he has talked to the parties concerned. Whether he will make any specific proposals will really depend on how close he judges the parties to be.

Murray?

Q Mr. Secretary, that certainly was not a very happy, exhilarated-looking group in the courtyard today. The two Presidents and those of you who were standing with him did not exactly -- did not by any means look like it had lived up in any way to President Sadat's talk of a bit meeting marking a historic moment.

Can you say whether from your perception the Egyptian leaders had much higher expectations which could not be fulfilled because of the American timetable?

And secondly, can you tell us whether the deadline of the expiration of the mandate in the Sinai is pressing with any urgency on your considerations?

SECRETARY KISSINGER: As I understood Mr. Marden's conclusions, I don't -- if he formed the impression that this was not a happy, exhilarated group that he saw standing in the courtyard at the Residence -- that is the name of the place -- and he wondered whether the expiration of the mandate in the Sinai might have been pressing on the consciousness of the unexhilarated group that was standing there.

If I can be frank and not be offensive to you ladies and gentlemen, you didn't look like a pretty exhilarated group to me, either. (Laughter) It could be that the atmospheric conditions had something to do with it because, I don't know how you show exhilaration when somebody holds an umbrella over you and rain is pouring down your back. But I am just beginning my lecture.

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Basically, we thought it was a very constructive meeting. It was not intended to reach any specific conclusions -- and it achieved that purpose. It was not intended to reach any precise conclusions that would lead to an immediate negotiation. It was, however, very positive, very constructive, and I think it provides the basis for useful talks with the Israelis. And I really think, Murray, that your impression was just not right.

The second part of your question was whether the imminence of the UNEF expiration was weighing on the leaders. I don't think it played any role in the discussions. It was never involved; it was never mentioned by either side. But I really want to go back to the first point.

It was not an occasion in which you could say a conclusion -- a final conclusion -- was reached, but I think the possibility exists for constructive further discussions with other parties.

Q Mr. Secretary, did President Ford promise President Sadat an American aid program at least as large as last year's? Was there talk or was there agreement reached on American participation in an international consortium that could help the economic development of Egypt?

SECRETARY KISSINGER: No. The question is: Did the United States promise aid at least as large as last year's and did the United States promise participation in an international consortium on Egypt's long-term economic progress?

With respect to the first question, the final decisions on American aid figures to Middle East countries will be reached after the conclusion of the general reassessment. But it is clear that we will retain an interest -- as the President made clear in his luncheon toast -- in the economic development and progress of Egypt, and it is our intention to make a substantial contribution to that, but what the precise figure is we will have to wait until the general decisions are made.

With respect to the idea on the long-term program, I think the word "consortium" is probably exaggerated, but we have indicated to a number of other countries that we favor assistance to Egypt for its long-term economic problems.

Q Mr. Secretary, what extent do you feel there was a similarity of views between the two Presidents on what should constitute the basis of an overall settlement?

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SECRETARY KISSINGER: We did not go into a discussion of the details of a final settlement. We discussed, rather, what approaches would be used if a final -- if that were the road that all parties decided they prefer to take, and how the discussions might be conducted. Of course, we are familiar with the Egyptian point of view on these matters -- which has been stated repeatedly and publicly -- but we have not taken any position on -- we have not taken a formal American position; for that matter, we have not taken an American position on an overall settlement.

Q Mr. Secretary, the Egyptian spokesman here yesterday seemed to give short shrift to your shuttle diplomacy, and step-by-step seems to be landing in the ash can. Did you have any consensus with Sadat -- before, have any consensus with Sadat on the one promising rule -- you know, the approach to this problem?

SECRETARY KISSINGER: The question is: The impression was created by the Egyptian spokesman yesterday that Egypt was not interested any longer in a step-by-step approach.

Q For a prolonged period.

SECRETARY KISSINGER: Of course, for a long period -- and that this seems to have given short shrift to one of the promising avenues.

Let me make clear, the United States is not pushing any one approach. As both the President and I have stated repeatedly, we are prepared to go to a Geneva Conference and we are prepared to discuss in that framework. At the same time, our conviction is that whatever approach is most promising should be pursued; and therefore, if other avenues open up we are prepared to pursue them.

I did not have the impression from the talks that any avenue was excluded or that there was any strong preference for one approach rather than another. There was a preference on which both parties agreed that some progress towards peace in the Middle East was essential. We do not want to commit ourselves to which of the approaches is the more likely to succeed until we have heard the Israeli views on that subject.

But I did not have the impression that the Egyptian side precluded any of the approaches.

Q Will you have a meeting of minds?

SECRETARY KISSINGER: We cannot have a meeting of minds until we have heard from the Israelis.

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Q Well, I mean meeting of minds between U.S. and Egypt.

SECRETARY KISSINGER: I think that we clearly understand the Egyptian view of what is in their view, what are the elements of an interim agreement, and also the Egyptian view of the procedures and content of an overall agreement. Now we have to get the Israeli views on this subject and then we can see how closely they mesh, and of course, as we have stated with respect to the interim agreement, both sides will have to look at their positions compared to what they were at the end of March, if one wants to get movement.

Q Before this meeting began, a senior American official said that there probably would be no announcements. He also said that would not mean an important decision was not reached. Are you now telling us that there was no important development here?

SECRETARY KISSINGER: No, I am trying to tell you that on the whole we are encouraged by these talks, in defense that we believe that serious discussions can be continued now on the issue of moving towards peace.

I have stated previously -- and so did the senior spokesman -- that no dramatic announcement could be expected here. It is the nature of things since the decisions involve many other parties. But we consider this meeting to have been helpful and we plan to have other meetings, and, of course, you know of the other meetings which will now be taking place.

Q Do you anticipate that any of the subsequent discussions will take place at Geneva, either at an overall conference or in a step-by-step basis but in Geneva, with other parties participating apart from the United States?

SECRETARY KISSINGER: There is no question that the Geneva Conference will have to be reassembled at some point. This is a view we have always had even during step-by-step diplomacy, and that view has not changed. All the parties are agreed to it. We are agreed to it.

What the next step will be, we want to reserve our judgment until we have had our other conversations. But it is my impression that on the basis of the discussions that have been taking place that there are possibilities for useful talks.

Q You have said on about a half a dozen occasions -- just now from the podium -- that what happens now depends on talks with the Israelis. Would it be unfair to say that in some way the Israelis have a hang-up to finding a path ---

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SECRETARY KISSINGER: No, I think this -- we have gone through this on many of the shuttles. There always is somebody you have talked to last and you are going to talk to next. It is, therefore, inevitable that when you get into the talks with the next person, that in the nature of the sequence you have to get their views before you can determine what is going to happen. We are not saying that any country is the hang-up. We did not elaborate a specific proposal with Egypt that will now be put forward with Israel. Rather, after we have discussed with Israel, we will then be in a position to see whether both parties should be encouraged to come forward with specific proposals or whether the time isn't right to go towards a more comprehensive solution.

But it is not of a nature where we can say here is a proposal and now ask Israelis to accept it. It is rather to get the Israeli point of view and then we would perhaps be in a position -- then we will be in a position to see whether both sides should be asked to be more complete.

Thank you.

MR. NESSEN: All right. Let me give you just one or two schedule items to wrap things up.

I didn't see a writing pooler at the luncheon so I will tell you that after the lunch the President and President Sadat went out on the balcony -- the weather had cleared by then -- and continued their talks for a few more minutes out on the balcony; then came back into a reception hall where they sat together, side-by-side in chairs, and talked for an additional 10 or 15 minutes. And then, the President saw President Sadat off and into his car.

Following that, the President changed into more leisure clothes, put a sweater on, and took Mrs. Ford out for some exercise on the grounds. (Laughter) That didn't quite come out right, did it? Well, you know what I mean. Or maybe you don't know what I mean.

This evening at 7:00, Chancellor Kreisky will pay a short courtesy call on the President, possibly 15 minutes to a half-hour, at Schloss Klessheim.

At 7:30, the President will have a private dinner at the Schloss Klessheim with a few members of his Staff, and after that he plans to go to bed early tonight because of the early start and the busy day tomorrow.

In terms of what we need to provide the traveling press with before we leave, one is a schedule of the day in Rome. We owe you a schedule for tomorrow which is in the process and should be available soon.

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I must tell you that there are three Presidential statements in Rome tomorrow -- an arrival statement, a luncheon toast, and I believe some remarks at the Vatican. I can in all honesty say that we will have these in advance. We will try. And I suggest that rather than waiting around you should check with the press office, perhaps, after your dinner.

Other than those items, I am prepared to say that we have a news lid, at least as far as the White House Press is concerned.

END (AT 12:16 P.M. EDT)