MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

PARTICIPANTS: President Ford
Dr. Henry A. Kissinger, Secretary of State and Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs
Lt. General Brent Scowcroft, Deputy Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs

DATE AND TIME: Monday, March 24, 1975
9:21 - 9:54 a.m.

PLACE: Oval Office

Kissinger: To sacrifice peace for half of the passes -- you told Allon the passes were now essential. At Vladivostok you could have sold Geneva for a good price. If they had said this wouldn't work earlier, we could have made other arrangements.

President: We told them that all along.

Kissinger: Sadat is willing to say in several different ways there will be no use of force. He agreed to renewal of the UN force.

President: I am afraid if this gets out, Sadat would be in trouble.

Kissinger: All of my party is outraged at the Israelis. They have decided that to trade territory for assurance, is disastrous.

President: I think the letter shows strength and initiative. I'm not afraid of the letter at all.

Kissinger: I think you should tell the leaders about the letter. Don't release a text, but explain it. The Israelis think they can use it against you.
[Dr. Kissinger then showed the President the chronology of how many times we had said that non-belligerency was impossible and the passes were essential.]

President: Your cables indicated that Rabin and Allon are okay.

Kissinger: I am no longer sure. Look at the record -- Allon was here in July. Rabin was here in September and you told him progress was essential. Our fatal mistake was all the equipment we gave them. We did it to strengthen Rabin's position and as a gesture of support and good will.

Allon came over twice and you told him. All this time Sadat has stuck with us. Faisal said he didn't agree with separate settlements. They argue they couldn't get non-belligerency. Sadat said he couldn't do non-belligerency with 180 kilometers of his territory still in Israeli hands. But he gave all the military components of non-belligerency: Cargoes through the Canal, relaxation on the boycott. They got 90% of what they asked. Israel made no serious effort. They kept haggling over details but they showed no serious purposes.

They never showed us a map so we never knew what they meant by the middle of the passes.

[More discussion.]

On oil, Israel agreed first to leave it an Egyptian enclave surrounded by Israel. Sadat said no because it would force his people to go through Israeli control.

The effect on our policy in the Middle East is devastating. The radicals are vindicated; Sadat is jeopardized. He will either go radical or be left. Either way, Israel will say "we told you so."

President: What should we do? I haven't thought it through.

Kissinger: They are sure they can outbest you militarily. But we should say: The F-15 team can't come. Peres shouldn't come. Every Department should put Israeli activities at the bottom of the list.

I would instruct Schlesinger to slow the LGB and Lance.

President: How about an NSC meeting so I can tell everyone?
Kissinger: I am Jewish. How can I want this? I have never seen such cold-blooded playing with the American national interest. Every Arab was looking to us; we had moved the Soviet Union out of the Middle East; even Iraq was being moved. What they have done is destroy this.

President: What do they think they have gained?

Kissinger: It could be Rabin wanted to do this and couldn't get it through, but the treatment of this letter makes me wonder. They are leaking it so they want a confrontation. Why? Because they see this as a never-ending process -- Syria coming next -- so they would rather throw down the gauntlet now. They will play the Jackson game with the Soviet threat. If you don't give arms, you weaken an ally; if you give them arms, they get total freedom.

They think they can get from Congress what they want and by-pass you.

But I wouldn't take them on at the meeting. Everything gets right back to them. I could give a rundown without assessing the blame. If we put out facts, we are ahead. At the end, you should say the Middle East is heading towards an explosion and a risk of war and a confrontation, and you have under these circumstances to reassess our policy.

President: And I can mention the letter in this context.

Brent and I talked every day while you were there, and I have no hesitancy to bite the bullet.

Kissinger: This is terribly painful to me. First of all we have to go to Geneva. Second, we have to put forward a global plan, which will inevitably mean close to the '67 borders. Callaghan offered to make a joint effort on his own. Sadat will renew the UNEF only for three months. Asad will renew not at all or only in such a way that both of them expire at once. Sadat will open the Canal but will say it is too dangerous to transit. He will ask for resumption of Geneva. There we will face an immediate and massive problem. The PLO will be the first issue raised and Israel will try to tie us up for months. The Soviet Union will put forth the '67 borders. We can put out ideas about special zones, and so on, but there is no need to do that immediately.

President: We must do that?
Kissinger: We are stopped on the step-by-step. I think there is a high chance of a war before 1976. Israel would rather have a war before 1977.

President: Rabin wasn't as forthcoming?

Kissinger: They weren't forthcoming at all. They couldn't have been under any illusion as to what was needed. If they couldn't give it, they could have said so in October and we could have sold Geneva. If I could have told Sadat in November we couldn't do it because of Rabat, he wouldn't have been happy but he wouldn't have been made a fool.

President: Tomorrow I will open the meeting, turn it to you, then end up with this assessment.

Kissinger: I am truly sorry we couldn't spare you this. But the letter will help you with the Arabs. Fahmy broke down when he announced it.

President: How about your press?

Kissinger: They are in shock. 80% of them are Jewish and they are practically in tears. Marvin Kalb said, "Maybe Israel knows something we don't, but if they don't, it's awful." They have brought the Soviets back in, and could have given the American people a shot in the arm which would have helped them.

Rabin, when I talked to him alone, said it was a Greek tragedy. I said his proposals were not unreasonable, but they were disastrous.

You have been very kind to the Israelis; what I have done is beyond description. And they do this to us at a moment when we need this. It is a disaster for the United States. We had it won -- the Soviet Union was out of the Middle East. They are bringing the world to the edge of war for three kilometers in the Giddi and 8 kilometers in the Mitla. Sadat even would have given them six to eight months to move.

President: We won't let the Israelis through their usual apparatus get us into a confrontation with the Soviet Union, the Arabs and the Europeans.

Kissinger: I agree -- that is why we need a program near the '67 frontiers.
President: At the NSC we will put the emphasis on the reassessment and planning.

Kissinger: I would say you have ordered a reassessment and a cooling of relations with Israel -- which should be friendly, but correct. Each agency should, as if it were on its own, hold back --

Brent, have I exaggerated?

Scowcroft: You have bent over backward.

President: Did you ever get the feeling they wanted to settle?

Kissinger: I told Brent it didn't feel right. They just somehow didn't act like they wanted a deal.

President: The papers are talking about an American failure. I want to insure that the leadership has a correct impression.

Kissinger: I can say we went there in good faith and the two sides just couldn't bridge the gap. But that is not fair to Sadat. Sadat tried -- Elts said he had given so much that it was dangerous.

President: A couple of other points. We had Brademas and that group in. They gave a lecture to us on principle. We were at loggerheads and Brent put out this idea: They wouldn't object to the Senate passage if then Turkey would offer concessions on troop withdrawals, Famagusta and something on territory. Then it would go through the House.

Kissinger: It can't work. No Turkish government could do that. Second, they won't agree to prior concessions. It will now be a package deal. Anything they give up they fear they won't have available for a final deal. And any concessions Turkey made, the Greeks wouldn't accept if they knew it would lift the embargo. Callaghan said that France wants to start a big arms program. It would never work. But if it got through the Senate, then maybe you could use a waiver and then get concessions.

President: Then there was a Schmidt phone call about Portugal.

Kissinger: I think Schmidt is wrong about telling a country how to compose its Cabinet. We are sending the Ambassador in in a general sense.
President: There are some encouraging signs. These four in the Revolutionary Council.

Kissinger: Soares had a rally today for 30,000. If we had mounted a campaign....

President: Should we do it now?

Kissinger: I would wait until the Cabinet thing sorts out, then if there is a chance, we should move.

President: Another cheery subject -- Vietnam.

Kissinger: It is not clear to me whether it's a collapse or it's an organised move.

Scowcroft: It started as the latter; it turned into the former.

Kissinger: We are responsible in large part. We cut them back to the point where they were clearly demoralized.

I think the American people don't realize. The Chinese -- how can they hold back on Taiwan if we are giving away everywhere else?

What the Israelis have done to us.... First on the trade acts, now on the Middle East. They knew exactly what was needed.

We should say all this is happening as a result of Congress. Faisal said you have let Cambodia go, Vietnam, Portugal, Turkey -- you will let Israel go also.

President: We went through another with the sub, but this turned out okay.

You have had your problems, but we have too.

Kissinger: You have behaved magnificently. The tragedy is that we had a good foreign policy. This is no reflection on you, but Israel doesn't think they have to be afraid of you.

President: They will find out.
Kissinger: [Brazil comments to Rogers.] I need to talk about the Latin American trip. I was supposed to go but is it a good time to be out of the country?

No one thought that the North Vietnamese would attack this year. They did it based on their assessment of American weakness. I think you should speak out on Vietnam.

The people will look back at the crisis created by eight lousy kilometers in a pass that nobody knows.

President: We made a massive effort I know of, on the invitation of the parties. I spoke to Allen, to Rabin, to Fisher, and to Golda. The sequence and timing was at the request of Israel. At the end, I will lay out the consequences. I should have a copy of the letter.

Kissinger: Step-by-step is dead. We have to consider whether we and the Soviet Union shouldn't make a global approach.
K To save some place for half size page -
you sent thru a paper missions report.

Get idea you could have sent similar report
good week. If they had read this would not
work (e.g. had we could have
made some compromise)

P After this that all along
K Salat leading to any several days way no
use except. Agreed to remove if possible.
P I know if this get out, Salat would be in trouble.
K All my port is a target to E. Soviets.
They have decided:

Trail leading for omission is disastrous
(keeping down this)

I think the latter some strength & initiative
I think you should try a bit more about a letter
Don't release a new but explain it. The I
think they can use it against you.
P I went against for letter at all.
K Should list of how many times we tried wind
air - burning impossible, posts essential.

I your calls until Robin & Allen OK
Have longer some, however meet Allen Jun
in July. Get Robin back in Sept + you
Told him your statement. Our final mistake
was over scoring on gone than, we did it
to strengthen him further + as a gesture
reassuring good will.
Allen came with Robin + you told him
All this time Salat has thought few F. word

Three arguments - they need to return -

今晚
Salut said he could not go 300 km of his country.
But he joined with Egyptians, larger than
Great Britain in the east. They got 95.
It was one piece of work. They left for one
Cairo detail but two marine purposes.
(No other argument) Then came themselves a team
to see where during what they meant by c
middle of a process.

(Time discussion)
On my, I agreed with E. We have surrendered.
By I, Salut said no, but because it
would have been better to go than to be.
Not the program but the control:
The impact on our policy in ME is
The military are involved, Salut generalized
and within possibilities beyond—within any
I will say we told you so

What shall we do?

They are sure they can contract you militarily
But 1/5 forces continue.

Nag would have
Every Dept should put a directive at
bottom of list

.. I would instruct Salute to kidding Question.

How about an NSC so I can tell everyone

I am Jewish—how can I want this. I have

With some real blood and Jewish playing up in

US must institute. Every Arab was looking
for us to lend them 50 out of ME, even

Egypt was very much, what they have

that is destroy this.
But why not.

What do they think they have gained?

I ought to phone and to do this. I must quit it. It's true. It's true, but I think it makes one wonder. They are hurting it. Do they want an explanation? Why? Because they see it as a means of making excuses. They must put some faith in that now. They will play. 

If you don't give away, you wouldn't sell it, if you do, they are just selling.

They think they can get from Long what they want to buy?

But I wouldn't take them or it is only. Every time they might have them. I could be of assistance to a necessary blame. If we sent out for it and not abroad abroad, you would say, it is leading to explosions in spite of some grandeur. You should understand. 

I aim to maintain the letter in this trial.

But I told you they are not going to hit a bullet.

This trial was intended to end. For it you will have to put them. I will not have to put them now. They will force me to your behalf from their side. If only they send a message. I will now not be only for both. They are not. They will send you money, but say not to draw them to transit. We will ask for service. Then we will have turned a
Every day Shipped from my 10-year firm
7th & 13.

No contacts my kind before new, only
mass in 1874. I will buy it as my pre
S. of four pairs. I will get back to make
we can put a pair of pans, etc., but we need
to do that much.

Are these that much?

We are stopped on step by step. I think the
high above much higher. I want him from
before.

R. was not as frightening?

They weren't frightening at all. They couldn't
have been under any influence what was made.
If they couldn't give it, they could have said so
in 1874. We could have told them.

If I could have told what I knew. Are we content
do it knowing what we shouldn't have been
happier but to wouldn't have been, made a fool?

Tomorrow I will go, turn at 8, you, then
and up to this place.

S. are we content? You mentioned, but he didn't will
help your C. Action. Follow to break down the
at noon.

How about your job?

They are in there. So, one Jewish and they
carefully in there. Look and everything
have something. We don't look after they don't
at any.

They have bought 5 lakes in, given 10,5
people that in a arm which would have
helped them.

Robin above and it mass a quick likely.
She'd be try.
Dear Sir

I have been very hard at work, what I have
done is beyond description. But they do this
until the moment when we need this letter.
I have

I am about for Us. We had a com-
discussion of the subject. They are buying
some time if we can. I know in order to
have both. So I could give them

I am really quite anxious, all my parts is

I have not word yet. I then think that my

I have that... so I am leaving them to

P. At this we will put things in -

K. I would say you have ordered a reassessment

K. I will write I don't feel palpity. They just

K. The news filled a US judge - I want to move

K. I can say we want them in good faith &

K. I can say we want them in good faith &

P. On the other hand. We will

P. On the other hand. We will

P. On the other hand. We will
Your different decision, Mr. Doctor, or
doesn't have to be rejected to China.

S. russian or better, and not France.
K. we are rep. in true part. We want them to be to
prevent this happening.

I think, again, people don't realize, China—how
can they hold back the evacuation if we going away
everywhere else.

I think—I have done to me...

(Back to F. understanding what course really)

I'm thinking, again, U.S.
We should say all this is happening as result
of China. Forced and you can't let Communist
go to NK, Poland, Turkey—let me out and I go out.

If we want them one take us in, but this could
not OK.

You have had yarn point, but we have to.
K. you have informed major general. The silly is
good, but I don't think they have to be afraid of you.

P. They will find out.

K. (Brazil comments to Rogers). I need to talk about
it they, supposed to go but it is good time to be out
of county.

Also USA that NK would attack these areas. They
did it based on assessment of NK intentions.

I think you should speak out on NK.

K2. People will look back at a crisis created by & being
know in a most nobody knows.

(Talking paper) F. Pero.
We made a massive effort to learn from the mechanics of training. The sequence of training was at the request of J.

At lunch, David lay out a consequence, I should have a copy of this letter.

Step by step, we should consider alternative ways of seeing it with a different approach.