CABINET MEETING

Wednesday, March 26, 1975

The Cabinet Room

[After preliminary comments President Ford asked Secretary Kissinger to speak on the suspension of his Middle East negotiations.]

President: Let's let Henry give us a rundown of his negotiation.

Kissinger: First let me explain what was our basic strategy. For a year and a half we were proceeding step by step.

In 1973, all of the Arabs were lined up against Israel, the radicals were in the ascendancy, there was an oil embargo, the Europeans had come out for the 1967 frontiers, and the Soviet Union was deeply involved. The United States was in the position where we were completely isolated, and any war and its impact over the world would be ascribed to American and Israeli intransigence. With Sadat's cooperation, we moved to the step-by-step approach. We kept the Soviet Union and Europeans on the sidelines and we kept the moderates in control. We recommended to Israel that it seek movement with Jordan and in the Sinai. The delays in this process brought about the result of Rabat, replacing Hussein with the PLO as spokesman for the West Bank, and Asad was trying to force global consideration of all the issues.

So there were two elements in these negotiations: the substance itself and the continuation of a process which would preserve the situation we had been able to develop. Throughout this period we worked closely with the Israelis and indeed followed their timetable. It brought us to this negotiation.

[He goes to the map of the Sinai.]

We have known for nine months that turnover of the passes and the oil fields was the basis to the negotiation. Israel said they would do it for nonbelligerency. What is nonbelligerency? It meant no use of force, no economic boycott, and no hostile propaganda, etc.
Sadat said that if he gave up all his means of pressure, how would he get back the rest of his territory? He agreed to give up the military aspects of belligerency but not all the political aspects. He agreed that the agreement would last until it was superseded by a new agreement -- in other words, indefinitely. He also agreed that the UN force would be renewed annually instead of every six months and he gave us a secret promise that it would be renewed. He also agreed to lift the embargo on a number of U.S. firms who operated in Israel.

Israel agreed to give up only half the passes, and Sadat thought that that was too humiliating.

I don't want to go into all the details because the real issues were the passes and nonbelligerency.

President: It was not a case of Egypt moving into the passes.

Kissinger: That's right, the UN would take them over. Without arguing the merits of all these points, if one looks at the process we were trying to preserve, the penalty for the breakdown is very serious. Egypt is now pushed in the direction of Arab unity. The possibility of a separate negotiation with Israel has been practically eliminated. We will be forced to go to Geneva, where the Soviet Union will have a somewhat strategic position. The Europeans will support the Soviet Union at Geneva. The UN renewals are coming up in April and May and probably will be extended for only a short time.

On the other hand, only we can produce progress. If we keep our cool, we can recover somewhat if we can produce progress. We may have to go through a stalemate and then at the proper moment present a comprehensive proposal. We will go through a tough period. The Arabs will coalesce, the Soviet Union will beat us around, and the Europeans and Japanese will push for a rapid settlement. By July and August we will have to produce progress. Otherwise there will be war within a year.

We now have to take the position that we are not more eager for a settlement than the parties. It will be a difficult period of months. We will have to avoid the possibility that we enter a process again that could be torpedoed at the last minute.
The problem for the Arabs is getting back their occupied territory; for Israel it is to get legitimacy. Without the return of the occupied territories, .... We have tried to negotiate in little bits to avoid talking about final frontiers. The Israelis can't seem to understand. We told them they had to talk either to Hussein or to Arafat -- they couldn't do neither. They chose neither and you see the result.

It has the elements of a Greek tragedy, where people bring on what they fear most by pursuing courses which appear quite logical to them.

We will be in a difficult situation in every international forum now, because we have no excuse for doing nothing.

President: We have spoken to Israel over several months and we had every expectation that there would be a settlement. That did not happen, so now we must rethink our position, and undoubtedly we will go to Geneva.

Henry, all of us are deeply grateful for the superior job you have done. I have nothing but the highest admiration for your dedication, your efforts, and your brilliance.

Butz: I think you speak for the whole Cabinet, Mr. President, and from my visits around the country, I believe you speak for the country.

[The conversation turned to consumer protection, then to the Congressional Budget Committee.]

Marsh: The Committee has established seminar-type hearings where government witnesses sit around the table with other witnesses.

Schlesinger: It tends to equate government witnesses with other pressure groups.

Weinberger: We have refused three times.

President: The Budget Committee isn't and won't become equipped to ask the kind of searching questions which need to be asked. So they bring in outside "experts" to make up for their own deficiencies.
very trim. E is now posted to CGS with POS. Possibility of separate event N of E has been practically slim. We
will be fr. CGS to CGS where SU will have a somewhat
positive initiative. E will resp. support SU at CCGS.

We reviewed key issues in April. Hope joint work will be

taken for only short time.

Our other body is only we can produce pg. If we
keep on good shape we can smoke somewhat if the can
produce pg. We may have to go thru Flaknote and
the page format prior to congestion project.

We will go thru Flak notes. CGS will continue, SU
will brief me, CGS. E will respond. E will push for

civil settlement by July - Aug we will have to produce
pgs; otherwise are we in a year.

We have to take position now with some urgency for
settlement. CGS has a position. It will be a different
form. We will have to avoid position again
that we could be jeopardized at a later point.

CGS is getting back to some occupied territory.

The return of occupied territory... we have tried to say
in little bits to avoid talking about final frontier. They
can't seem to understand we told them they had to talk
to Hessean or Anglo-they wouldnt even listen. They
chose another and open in a result.

It has elements of good will surely where people say a

nothing for now by passing conversations upon
good relations.

we will be in a different situation in very much soon
now in mane situation.

we have started E may turn months and

had some indication of new information that there would be a settlement
that did not happen, to your own most ultimate...and absolutely go toences.

All forms are deeply qualified for no reason for any

uncontrollable. Some writing but to publish. No

for your evaluation, efforts, advances, etc.

is that by our use for a whole is still from my

your own community for enemy

Common common motion.

Good Budget write discussion.

March. The court here is the seminaries type hearings. We

cannot witness. It means to tell in other winters.

Schenks, it tends to separate. And in witness, in other present

groups.

Wardings. We have refused. 2. Times.

P. Budget write and we must become equipped with

a kind of searching questions which are all-trained.

So they have instead of experts to make for their

own deficiencies.