MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

PARTICIPANTS: Mr. Max Fisher
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: Thursday, March 27, 1975
3:10 p.m.

PLACE: The Oval Office
The White House

President: I don't think I have ever been so disappointed as when I heard Henry was coming back without a settlement. It was as low as I have been in this office. The impression I had, after my meetings with Allon twice, with Rabin, with Golda, etc., was that we had been working so closely that when the chips were down they would see how deeply this would affect the prestige of the United States. When the final decision was made, their inflexibility has created all sorts of problems. When Henry reported to the leadership, they without exception strongly supported our efforts and were quite critical of Israeli actions.

The result is that we have undertaken a reassessment. That doesn't mean we will drop Israel but we have to go on a broader basis. You know me well enough personally and officially -- we just can't get led down the primrose path and be rejected.

Kissinger: Max doesn't know that the timing resulted from Israeli insistence.
Fisher: I don't feel any better than you. I had lunch with Dinitz today. I have the transcript of what he said in New York. My first responsibility to you is to keep things cool. That is what I tried to do. I called the president of every community in the U.S. I didn't want sermons coming out on Passover week and the 30th anniversary of the Holocaust.

To make a decision which in their own mind they had to know created a gulf with the U.S. -- something must have happened. I just don't know. I think we all have a desire for peace. I agree with your strategy, and I see what could happen at Geneva.

This coming on top of everything else -- with a Congress wanting to act like a State Department. But the only one who can settle this is the United States. The Soviet Union can't do it.

Kissinger: That was our policy. But Eban and Peres and a third of the Jews go around saying let's go back to Geneva. You can't undermine us and keep telling us to do it.

Fisher: The Jewish Community is saddened and disturbed by this, but they haven't lost the reservoir of good will. I read Safire today. You have done a tremendous job for the U.S. -- don't let a small group get to you. Look at the rank and file of the people. If anything can be salvaged, you can do it.

Kissinger: But the Israelis have to help us if anything can be salvaged. When Eban and Peres say we should go to Geneva, it cuts any other way.

Fisher: I told Dinitz that, tough as it looks, we can't let it go down the drain -- and it will. I think there must be some sober realizations in both Israel and Egypt. Geneva will just be a shouting match. I think both sides want peace. How it got off the rail, I don't know. But before we get too far off, I want to suggest... The reassessment raises too many fears. This weakens the hand of what you are doing in diplomacy. I feel that people are having second thoughts, but I can't prove it. I think they may be facing up to it. The blame is never totally on one side. I want to keep things calm and with maximum good will. I owe that to you.
President: Henry and I have spent more time on this than on any other foreign policy issue. We put my credibility on the line and it was a hell of a disappointment. I detect an undercurrent that some in the community are spreading the word I am turning my back on Israel and they made unkind remarks about Henry. We haven't taken one step about Israel. But when people start to attack, the impulse is to lay out the record. We haven't done it because we want a solution, but when we have been led down the primrose path, ...

Fisher: Let me tell you about the things I hear. In my room Sunday I will have ten stalwart people there to tell them what I believe. I will put it on the table. I think Henry is right. You have a tremendous amount of good will, I want to find out what went wrong. I want to get an excuse for going over there to find out. Meanwhile, I will do what I can to hold things calm. Israel has no chance without the U.S. Somehow we have to find a solution. I don't want to go over there on a delegation, as Javits wanted, I don't want to do that.

Kissinger: I didn't encourage him. I don't know what could be done.

President: We see no alternative now to Geneva. We don't like it but I see no choice. We have warned about Geneva for eight months -- now the Jews are starting to worry about it.

Fisher: We have to be positive and do what we can.

President: You are a good friend, and I had to tell you on a personal basis that nothing has hit me so hard since I've been in this office. I see no choice but Geneva. Maybe something will turn up, but unless people will sign on the dotted line, I see no alternative.

Fisher: But if you go to Geneva, Israel has to fight on the basis of the '67 frontier.

Kissinger: That's what we have been saying.

Fisher: We have got to try to find a solution. It can't be settled by the Soviet Union; the Europeans. I want to be of service on this.

President: Keep in touch with Henry and Brent. We will keep cool and calm but we must set a steady course. Unless we get a firm commitment, we can make no promises.
Fisher: How do you account for it?

Kissinger: Frankly, they looked at what happened with Iran and Iraq, and they didn't want to be dependent on Iranian oil; they looked at Southeast Asia; they looked at our domestic weakness. Peres wanted to stick it to Rabin and pick up the pieces. No one had tried to prepare the people. They were paralyzed from the second day. Rabin couldn't carry his Cabinet, I think. He doesn't have the strength of Golda.

President: And whoever is giving them advice on American domestic policy gave them bad advice. If this ends up in a confrontation with the Soviet Union and an oil embargo, there will be a turnaround in this country. I supported Israel because I think it is right. Some of my best friends are Jews because I admire strength and brains. I feel awful to be put in this kind of position.
P

PT

27 Nov 52

I think this is been even taken as hopeless
coining & branding it was coming back w/o a settlement. It was so long I have been in the office. The impressions I had
aptly of Allen & Sons, Seeb & Co. do not contradict that this was expected as closely
that unless things came down they would
see how deeply this would affect the
financing for US. Even after those
we simply think a finality has seemed all
sorts of proof. Since (?) the leadership
they will spot it actually supported
appeal to was quite needless. Furthis
result is that we have indication of
a reimbursement. That don't sound we will
why I don't see how to pass a brand new
financing can still using especially
International we just can get it down
a promising path in relief.

K

Declaratory that the timing would be
from competition.

F

I don't feel any different than you, I told lunch
at dinner today. I had thought of what could
use N.Y. My first reply to you is to keep things
cool. That is what I have to do. I called Peck at
every evening in U.S. I couldn't want you
coming on further week to come.

UNCLASSIFIED

[Signature]
To make a decision which in their own mind
they had to know related a given 80% US, something
must have happened. I just didn't know. I think
we will have done in fact. I agree w/your strategy
I see what will happen next season.
This is coming on top of everything else. We eventually
come to St. Saint. But only once and
only do this in US. So I can't do it.

K That was some gain. But E wants one & % of goals
produced by another way back to action. St your
understanding we keep thinking we'd do it.

F The French leaders are usually disturbed by the fact
every quadrant has a running good will & dead
Suburbs in the new two days. So maybe tomorrow or job
for US don't let a second group get to your book
at least a few of people. If anything can be saved
good men to do.

K But I have to help us if anything can be
tolerated. When E isn't there in should
to come up to extraordinary effort very.

F I told Emily that tomorrow it looks imminent but it is
dangerous charm - it will it think that want to
return from yesterday in both E & C game will
got new center match. I think both sides
won't pass. How it put if we'd had those times that
at first were put to base off, I want to suggest:

Borrowment seemed too many sound. This
instantaneous kind of what you are doing is
disciplining - I find that people are having 2nd
We should start tonight on this plan. My father has

been very ill lately. Jim is very ill too. I went to the

doctor's and they said I was in a bad state. I

told them about my father and they sent me

home. We have some important matters to

discuss. We cannot delay any longer. We need

to make a decision soon.

I will see you later.