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MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

SECRET/NODIS/XGDS

MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

PARTICIPANTS: President Ford
Hedi.Nouira, Prime Minister of Tunisia
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, May 1, 1975
10:30 a.m. (60 Minutes)

PLACE: The Oval Office
The White House

Nouira: I bring you greetings from President Bourguiba as well as a statement of his esteem for you, Mr. President.

The President: Please express my gratitude to President Bourguiba for his good wishes, my esteem, my hope for his health and my hope that he may visit us soon. Please express to him the feeling of the American people -- going back many years -- of friendship and appreciation for the moderate policies of Tunisia under his leadership.

[Secretary Kissinger comes in.]

I know you are meeting with Secretary Kissinger and will announce the Joint Commission. We think this can be very useful in promoting our joint efforts and your further economic development. We are most grateful for the constructive role that your country has played in matters relating to the Mediterranean and the Middle East. We hope you can continue to play that role in the period ahead. I would be grateful for your observations.

First, may I say that our policy is one of forward movement. We will not tolerate a stalemate and stagnation. We are emphatic in our statements to all the parties that there can be no military action as we search for ways to continue progress.



~~TOP SECRET~~ XGDS (3)
CLASSIFIED BY: HENRY A. KISSINGER

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E.O. 12958, SEC. 1.5
NSC MEMO, 11/24/00, STATE DEPT. GUIDELINES, State Review 3/16/04
BY: JJA, NARA, DATE 5/14/04

Nouira: I would like first to say that Tunisia has never been a country that favors excesses. We have a long history, and many different civilizations have been in our country, so we have always been open to the outside. We operate not from emotion but from a realistic appraisal of the situation. We are always for dialogue -- even during our struggle for independence, we advocated dialogue with our occupying power. That is even more important in the world today. Force is the most abhorrent way to conduct international relations. Since we are a small country, we feel that legitimacy is the most important way to conduct affairs. It is on that that we have our policies toward the Mediterranean, the world and the societies in the world.

As we look to the situation in the Mediterranean, we see it through Tunisia's eyes, so it may not include all the data -- since all events in the Mediterranean concern us directly. That refers not only to the Middle East proper but also with respect to possible differences with some of our neighbors.

With respect to the Middle East, our government stands fast regarding the legality which must prevail. All territory gains by force must cease. American policy is a positive policy, though it has not achieved great success.

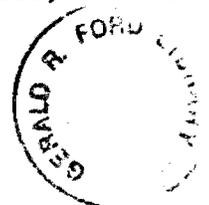
The President: The policy initiated in 1973 we think was successful, and we thought another step would have been useful. But despite that, we feel that movement is essential and we hope the countries of the Middle East share our feeling that progress must continue to be made.

Nouira: It is quite so, Mr. President, and the policy of the United States is one which envisages a global solution involving all issues, and we think the problem can't be solved without including all of the parties -- including the Palestinians. So we do believe in a global solution and that is how we understand the American policy. That also we think is President Sadat's policy and that of the others who may seem very reserved on this matter.

The President: We do believe a settlement must include the legitimate rights of the Palestinians and we think any agreement must take that full into consideration.

Nouira: Wouldn't it be better and more clear to involve the Palestinians immediately in the process of seeking a solution?

The President: I know this is the policy of a number of countries like yourselves, but until we see how those rights fit into the overall structure, I don't think we should commit ourselves at this time.



Secretary Kissinger: As the Prime Minister has undoubtedly noticed, we have an extreme domestic problem when we deal with the Middle East. As you must have noticed, this is the first President at least since 1956 who has publicly taken a position of some dissociation from Israel. If we now get involved with the issue of the PLO at this stage, it would undermine our efforts, because the PLO is still considered here as a terrorist organization. If we deal first with the border and territorial problems, the Palestinian problem will then fall into line. The Israeli strategy is to produce a stalemate and push the issue into our election year. The more confused the situation is, the more it facilitates that. This is why the President has emphasized that we will tolerate no stalemate.

The President: It would be very disruptive to have anything going on during an election in the United States.

Nouira: It seems to be a problem of procedure, not of substance.

The President: I wouldn't put it so simply. I think it is mandatory to keep it moving both as to time and substance. Any delay invites military activity, and we are trying to keep things moving. There are issues of substance but you can't get to them until you get negotiations going.

Nouira: This negotiating process has been started by the disengagement process. The disengagement allowed a direct dialogue with Egypt and a less direct dialogue with Syria

Kissinger: Every dialogue with Syria is direct.

Nouira: This could be considered as a continuing dialogue, and the Palestinians could be brought in somewhere along the line. They can't be ignored forever.

The President: We recognize their rights, but don't believe we can take that on at the outset, but it must evolve as other things are settled first.

Nouira: It seems to me that the Arabs have not voiced reservations about continuing the dialogue with respect to bringing in the Palestinian question.

The President: This is a matter of great significance to Israel and the refusal of the PLO to recognize Israel complicates things considerably. And it is my judgment that the issue can best be brought in in the context of a comprehensive settlement with peace being the objective.



Nouira: I realize that the ultimate goal is peace, but the matter of recognition of Israel by the PLO is more formal than real. The PLO doesn't deny the existence of Israel, but if Israel doesn't recognize the PLO, why should the PLO recognize Israel? Can't we somehow cut this Gordian knot?

The President: I can assure you we will carefully consider your thought. We hope we can complete our assessment soon and be ready to move forward, because we think movement is essential and we must have the parties avoid the resort to force.

Nouira: It is a wise and laudable policy, and I think the U.S. Government has the dimension and weight to solve the problem. I realize you can't solve it by waving a wand, but I know you will continue what you can.

The President: I know you are concerned about your security. I want you to know that despite the Congressional cuts, we will do whatever we can to assist with training and equipment. Congress has cut the grant aid badly, but we will try through sales to help you to the best of our ability.

Nouira: I appreciate your comments. Tunisia has never been fond of arms because we believe the first defense is at home. So we are trying to raise the standard of living, so we are trying to provide jobs so that young men will have something worth defending. But others are arming more than necessary and we wonder why. We would rather use your aid to raise our living standards, but we would like to be able to defend ourselves while we are developing. Our army stays in the barracks, but others don't, and that concerns us.

We attach the greatest importance to development and we want to thank you for the American efforts to help us. Since our independence, we have gotten a third of all our assistance from the United States. We have made a great effort, and now we think we are in a pre-takeoff phase. Takeoff is estimated at about 1981. When an aircraft takes off, it needs extra power, and we hope the United States will give us help in reaching cruising speed in our development.

The President: As you know, I must work with the Congress in getting authority, but I will do what I can to assist you in your takeoff. You will be speaking to Congressmen and I think you should emphasize this point to them.

Nouira: I feel encouraged by your words, and they will give me courage when I meet with the Congressmen. Tunisia has been making great efforts. In our



Fourth Plan, outside aid was 40 percent; then in the Fifth it went to 24 percent and now it is at 17 percent. We don't want to break our stride, and I will stress this to the Congress.

President: I hope you will stimulate private investment. It is the best in our country, and I think it will help keep your momentum.

Nouira: That is exactly what we are doing. The contributing of the private sector has doubled over ten years -- from 20 percent to 45 percent.

[The meeting ended]



✓ P/Kouira/K

1 May 75

✓

H I bring you greetings from B as well as statement of his letter

P ~~He~~ I have expressed my gratitude for his good wishes my return, hope for his health & that he may visit us soon - Please express to him a feeling of Arab people - going back many years - of friendship & appreciation for the moderate policies of a ^{Tunisian} part under his leadership (K comes in)

I know you are meeting w/K & will discuss a joint comm. We think this can be very useful in promoting our joint efforts & your further effort. We are most grateful for a constructive role your country has played in matters relating to Arab MF. We hope you can continue to play that role in a peaceful & ahead. I would be grateful for your observations - first may do our policy is one of forward movement - no statements & stagnation - we are explicit in our statements to all parties that there can be no unilateral action as we ^{search} ~~search~~ for ways to continue progress.

H I would like to say Tunisia has never been a country favoring extremes we have long traditions & many dignitaries have been in our country we have always been open to criticism. We speak not from emotion but a realistic appraisal of a sit. We are always for dialogue - underlining our struggle for independence we should

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E.O. 12958, SEC. 3.5

NSC MEMO, 11/24/98, STATE DEPT. GUIDELINES, State Review 3/9/04

BY llh

5/14/04



strategy of our occupying power. That we
more imp. in a world today. Free is a most
adherent way to conduct with nations. Since
we are small, we feel lightning is most
important way to conduct affairs. It is our hope
that we have our policies toward a land, & a world
& a generation in a world. A we look to it in
hand, we see it then. I remain eyes, &
myself include all data - since ^{all the elements in a} world
concern us directly. That we not only to
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a US policy. That also we think is a good policy
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on this matter.



P as it's behind a ~~rather~~ ~~secret~~ ~~initial~~ - legal rights of c Paks & we think any agreement must take that fully into consideration.

N Wouldn't it be better & more clear to involve c Paks immediately in a process of seeking a solution?

P I know this is a policy for # of countries like you know but until we see how those rights fit with a overall structure I don't think we should commit at this time.

K As PAK has noticed, we have an extreme domestic push when we deal w/ c PK. As you must have noticed that this is 1st press at least since it's who has publicly taken a position of some disavowal. If we now get involved w/ a issue of c PAK at this stage it could undermine our efforts, cause c PAK is still considered here a terrorist organization. If we deal 1st w/ broader & treaty probs, c Paks prob will then fall into line. The strategy is to produce statements & push a issue with our election year. It's more exposed - it is a more it favorable that. That's why c P has emphasized in statements.

P It would be very desirable to have any thing going on during an election in c US.

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discussion & weight to subject. I wish you
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stride & I will stress this to Corp.

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It is lost in our country & I think it will
help help your movement.

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