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THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

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May 1, 1975

MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

PARTICIPANTS:

- His Excellency Ashraf Ghorbal
Egyptian Ambassador
- His Excellency Amr Musa
Egyptian Foreign Minister's Office
- The Honorable Zakari Loufty Gomaa
Chairman, Foreign Relations Committee
- The Honorable Ramzi Stino
Vice Chairman, Industry and Power Committee
- The Honorable Doctor Layla Taqla
Member, Education and Scientific Research Committee
- The Honorable Mustapha Kamel Murad
Chairman, Economic Committee
- Mrs. Murad
- The Honorable Abdul Latif Abdul Rahman el-Husseiny
Chairman, The Committee for Transport
- The Honorable Muhiebdin Abdul Salam Al-Shazli
Member, Transport and Communications Committee
- The Honorable Mansour Mohamed Mahmoud Hassan
Member, Planning and Budget Committee
- Mrs. Hassan
- The Honorable Doctor Roushdi Said
Member, Local Government and People's Organization Committee
- The Honorable Doctor Mohamed Safwat Mohie el-Din
Vice Chairman, Foreign Relations Committee
- Mr. Tahsin Bashir
Presidential Press Supervisor for President Sadat
- The Honorable Ahmad al-Denerdash Touni
Member, Foreign Relations Committee
- Doctor Gamal Oteify
Deputy Speaker for the People's Assembly and Head of the Delegation
- Mrs. Oteify



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PARTICIPANTS:
(Continued)

Vice President Nelson A. Rockefeller
Captain Jonathan T. Howe
Vice President's Office
Mr. Robert B. Oakley
National Security Council Staff
Mr. H. Freeman Matthews
Director of Egyptian Affairs - NEA
Department of State

TIME AND PLACE: May 1, 1975 - 11:30 a.m.
Vice President's Conference Room

Vice President:

Please excuse me for being late. It is a great pleasure for me to meet with you. All of us in this country are glad you are here. I spent an hour and forty-five minutes with your President at the time of King Feisal's funeral. As a politician, I admire his political sagacity as well as admiring his statesmanship. He is one of the most respected political leaders in the world today. And your Foreign Minister I knew when he was Consul General in New York. He even has children who are American because they were born in New York.

This is a very difficult and serious period for the world. It is a sad chapter in the history of the U. S. but we all have ups and downs. We all need to learn, sometimes the hard way. The U. S. is still recovering from two difficult emotional experiences, Vietnam and Watergate. We need to pull together now and I believe we will do it. If I were asked by an historian about Nixon as President, I would say he was a man of real stature who made a major contribution to the U. S. and then he "blew it."

This country is dedicated to achieving peace in the Middle East, and we understand the urgency. I met with your President in Riyadh and I could sense the realities of the time factor as well as the economic and other problems Egypt faces. My family has long

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Vice President:
(Continuing)

been interested in your country. The museum and the development and history of your city have been of active interest. I was on the Egyptian desert listening to the radio when Nasser made his Suez Canal speech so you can see I have a long association with Egypt. I remember meeting Foreign Minister Fawzi when he came to Washington to see Eisenhower in 1953 or 1954. I was an Assistant to the President for International Affairs. Fawzi was very frank. Egypt would have to develop one way or another, either economically or militarily. I suggested we back your economic development and work with Egypt but we had a Secretary of State who was very strong and he did not agree. Now we are at a new crossroads and we must make new decisions concerning your country and the Middle East.

We have great respect for your President for going the last mile and even the extra mile in the last negotiations. As Vice President I have no responsibilities but presiding over the Senate so it is easy for me to talk. But it is clear that any cause but peace leads to disaster for everyone, not only for the Middle East. So we all want to work together. We want to help as best we can but we know time is short.

Dr. Oteify:

The achievement of peace is important and we want to stop the arms race. It reduces the amount of our budget which should go for development. You are well known in the Arab world and now that you are Vice President we shall expect even more.

Vice President:

I will do my best but I have no real responsibilities. As someone once said, "all the Vice President has to do is preside over the Senate and check the health of the President every day."

Dr. Oteify:

As Parliamentarians we have been very interested to meet our U.S. colleagues. We have received many of them in Egypt. Our tour thus far has been very successful. At least we have opened the door

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Dr. Oteify:
(Continuing)

to greater understanding by some of the members of Congress. You understand well our situation. You are aware of the difficulties, the need to achieve peace and that Egypt has done its utmost in the last talks.

Vice President:

We have great admiration for your President who is working with very difficult situations. He has shown courage and a clear understanding of Egypt's long-term interests.

Dr. Oteify:

My colleagues and I are disturbed that Israel is asking for 1.8 billion in military aid. We sincerely hope this will not be approved since if it were, no one in the Arab world could understand it.

Vice President:

The Secretary has said that no aid level has been established and that the whole question is under review. That is where it stands. You must understand that right after World War Two there was a tremendous wave of sympathy for the Jews, victims of terrible persecution by the Nazis and others. This led to a strong emotional commitment to the state of Israel. But where are the lines, the boundaries of this state? There is a more realistic understanding in this country today than before. The Jewish community is very generous in campaign funds for the candidates but the new campaign financing laws with the United States Government financing a large part of the expenses is important. It will reduce this kind of influence.

The U.S. commitment to Middle East peace and avoiding a larger confrontation is strong. No one in the U.S. wants to see the Middle East go back to war or to see the U.S. involved in a war. There is a very difficult situation in the U.S. after Vietnam. The mood is different but it has not yet crystallized. We need to solve our problems by intelligent policies and by working together. The days when one person alone could do it all by himself are gone. Look at Senator Percy, though, as an example of the changed

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Vice President: mood. He has recently been very outspoken about
(Continuing) U.S. national interests in the Middle East, even though he has a large Jewish constituency. So you know his position was not taken lightly.

Dr. Oteify: Senator Percy is right about the U.S. national interest in the Middle East. Saudi Arabia is very important for the U.S.

Vice President: I know from my talks with King Khalid and Crown Prince Fahd that Saudi Arabia is a strong supporter of Egypt. They told me they consider Egypt to be the leader of the Arab world.

Mr. Touni: Vietnam is over now and it is time to hurry in the Middle East. I think there has been a change in attitude by the United States.

Vice President: But many people still do not understand the dangers of the Middle East and the importance of the area to the U.S. They are also still emotionally preoccupied by the aftermath of Vietnam. So your visit is very timely. Now they can begin to focus. For example, the Congress has done little on the energy problem yet we could be self-sufficient by 1985 if we spent a little money. It shows Congress is not yet pulled together. But I believe they do want to see the Middle East problem brought to a conclusion. They would prefer to spend money at home and not on the Middle East.

Mr. Touni: You must move quickly if you are going to do this.

Vice President: Your President said three months was the period during which action needed to be taken but the Saudi leaders said one year. Some initiative will have to be taken by this country, by President Ford, within a matter of weeks. This is the major problem facing us in the international field.

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Mrs. Taqla:

The question of military aid for Israel is intricate for the U.S. as well as Egypt. The question of aid to Israel and Egypt is still to come up. What about the idea of a contingency fund giving the Administration flexibility to move as it judges best?

Vice President:

I asked a Representative the other day what would happen. He thought Congress would vote aid for Israel. But this is not exclusive to our interest in peace, the relationship is not mutually exclusive. However, the U.S. is not crazy about blackmail attempts of the sort that was reported the other day when Israeli leaders were supposed to have said they would not move any further toward peace until they got more aid.

Dr. Mohie el-Din:

What is the position of the U.S.? Will it try the interim step or is the U.S. committed to any extent?

Vice President:

Only if all the parties agree can you have peace, so we must search for such a position, not try to impose it, at least the parameters. But then Israel is one state and there are several Arab states around it. All concerned must be convinced. The problem is not new, maybe it is even 2,000 years old. It is very difficult and sensitive for the US with the PLO and the USSR involved but our commitment to peace is firm, we see no other course. It cannot be achieved overnight but a framework must be found.

Dr. Mohie el-Din:

Will Israel not agree in return for U.S. support? Should Israel not walk with the U.S. when the U.S. sees an opportunity for peace?

Vice President:

Logic is with you but the Israeli Cabinet has a problem and logic may not correspond to political realities within that country. There are lots of tough people involved in this issue. Please excuse me. I must go to the swearing-in of the new Secretary of Commerce.

[Vice President leaves the room at 1200.]

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