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THE WHITE HOUSE

PRESS CONFERENCE
OF
HENRY A. KISSINGER
SECRETARY OF STATE

ROOM 450
OLD EXECUTIVE OFFICE BUILDING

2:08 P.M. EDT

SECRETARY KISSINGER: Let me begin with the trip and deal with the European portion first, and then discuss briefly the meeting with President Sadat, and then we will follow the procedure that Ron outlined, and I will take questions on the trip and on the Sadat portion and then any general questions that you might want to raise.

The basic purpose of the trip was outlined by the President in his speech to the Congress in early April. It was to have an opportunity to exchange views with the other leaders of NATO, to assess the current state of the Alliance, to determine where the Alliance should go in the period ahead, and to use this opportunity as well to discuss a number of special problems that may have arisen.

With respect to the NATO summit, it is obvious that in the post-Indochina period, certain questions have arisen with respect to how the United States will react to accept that and what this means to its other Alliance relationships.

But apart from this special problem, there is also the fact that the President has not had an opportunity to discuss with his colleagues as a group the future of the Western Alliance and that the future of the Western Alliance requires consideration quite apart from whatever special problems may have arisen for the United States.

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I would put these in perhaps three categories: The problems that are inseparable from modernizing the original concept of NATO; that is to say, how to bring the defense arrangements of the Western Alliance in line with current realities; the second is to discuss the new issues that have arisen as a result of changing circumstances and of different emphases that must be given as a result of these changing circumstances; and the third is to use this opportunity to discuss a number of special problems that exist together with the relationship with the East European countries and the Soviet Union; that is to say, the relationship between detente and security.

These will be the major issues that the President will address.

With respect to the military issues, they, of course, will have been discussed in some detail by Secretary Schlesinger, with his colleagues in the DPC, and there will be no need for the President to go into the technical details of all of these issues.

But the basic fact is that the Alliance was conceived in a period of American nuclear monopoly, and it has to be adapted to conditions of effective nuclear parity.

The Alliance was developed in a period when the nature of the military threat seemed relatively clear-cut, and it has to be adapted to circumstances when the military threat can take on many more complicated forms.

The Alliance was developed at a period of great American material preponderance, and it has to be adjusted to conditions more in keeping with the realities of the emerging European economic strength and, therefore, the balance that has to be achieved between the two sides of the Atlantic.

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I repeat, those issues will have been discussed in specific terms by Secretary Schlesinger, but they will be discussed in their conceptual aspect by President Ford, together with his colleagues, because while security is not enough as a basis for the Western Alliance, without security there is no basis for the Western Alliance at all.

The second set of issues concerns the new problems that have arisen growing out of the interdependence of the world economy and the impossibility on founding cooperation entirely on military measures.

Two years ago, when this was put forward in the proposal for the Year of Europe, it led to rather intense debate. Today, the interrelationship between economic, political and security elements is a fact. In fact, two years ago, there were some who argued that the Western Alliance had no role except in the military field. Today, most of our allies insist on the proposition that the economic policies of the industrialized countries must be brought into some relationship with each other if there is to be any effective future.

It is no accident that the summit is occurring at the end of a week that begins with the meeting of the IEA, goes through a meeting of the OECD, and culminates in the summit.

The IEA -- the International Energy Agency, which we consider one of the success stories of the recent period -- links together most of the consuming nations into an organization designed to enable the consumers to take some control over their economic destiny by cooperative programs of conservation, alternative sources and financial solidarity.

This will be the first ministerial meeting since the Washington Energy Conference and it will take stock of the past and look into the future.

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The OECD, comprising most of the industrial nations of the world, will address the problem of industrial growth and the relationship of the industrial nations to the less developed nations, so that the summit of the Western Alliance is coming at the end of a period in which the Defense Planning Committee has looked at the security side.

The other meetings have addressed the economic and energy aspects so that the leaders of the Western Alliance can look at the whole architecture of their relationship and develop a concept of security transcending the purely military aspect.

The third element that will be discussed at Brussels is the relationship between the Communist and the non-Communist world, or between the Western Alliance and the Communists.

As the Administration has repeatedly pointed out and as the President again emphasized yesterday, we consider the easing of tensions, where it can be honorably done, an essential goal of Western policy and we will make every effort to pursue the same.

We do not believe that the easing of tensions is an alternative to Alliance policy. We think that both of these elements of policy are integrally related to each other. Without the strength of the Alliance there would be no basis for detente that is based on equivalence.

But without demonstrating to our people that serious efforts are being made to improve international conditions that confrontation is not an end in itself, we will also not be able to maintain the strength that is needed for realistic detente.

There are before the West three major areas in which negotiations are at this moment going on. The negotiations on SALT, which concern the Alliance indirectly but which are being conducted primarily between the United States and the Soviet Union; the negotiation on the mutual balance force reductions, in which NATO is negotiating with the Warsaw Pact; and

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the negotiations on European security in which all European nations -- NATO, Warsaw Pact, as well as the so-called neutrals, participate.

No doubt, the President will review with his colleagues in plenary sessions and in the bilateral meetings, the status of these negotiations and will discuss how they can best be promoted.

While in Brussels, the President will have a series of bilateral meetings; indeed, after the completion of the Brussels meetings, he will have had bilateral meetings within the month with every leader of the Western Alliance. You will have the schedule of those meetings and therefore, I will not go through them.

It is obvious that particular attention will be paid to his meetings with the Greek and Turkish leaders. He will see Prime Minister Karamanlis and Prime Minister Demirel on Thursday morning.

As you know, the United States has played an active role, at the request of the parties, to be helpful in bringing about a solution of the Cyprus dispute as well as of the other issues that exist between Greece and Turkey.

It is a complex set of issues in which a long historic legacy profoundly complicates the solution and in which the domestic situation of the participants does not always facilitate progress, not to speak of our domestic situation.

Nevertheless, we believe that the two sides, both in the communal talks and in the talks that have now begun between the Greek and Turkish foreign ministers, are beginning to grope their way towards positions that may prove to be negotiable and insofar as we can make a contribution to this, we will do so. After all, our international involvement in the post-war period began with the Greek-Turkish aid program. We value our relations with both of these countries.

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We believe that their tensions are a tragedy for the Western Alliance and in the long-term, a tragedy for the countries concerned and we will do our utmost to facilitate a solution. But we must also keep in mind that it is not the United States that can produce a solution. The solution must be produced by negotiations among the parties.

We can help, we can use whatever influence we have, but we cannot substitute for the parties concerned. But the President will give a considerable amount of attention to that problem.

You know that he will meet with the British Prime Minister and with the German Chancellor. He will also meet with the Prime Minister of Portugal and there will be, as I pointed out, individual appointments with all of the leaders that he has not seen recently as a result of their visits to Washington.

Let me now turn to the visit to Spain. The United States believes that the relationship of Spain to Western Europe and to the Atlantic Alliance is in a sense an anomaly. Spain is one of the principal countries of Western Europe. Its security and its progress is closely linked to that of the rest of the continent and the United States has believed that a relationship ought to be established between Spain and NATO. For a variety of reasons, that has not proved possible.

Therefore, the President thought it desirable to visit Spain to discuss with the Spanish leaders their conception of the future evolution and the relationship of that to Western security and progress. We believe that through such conversations we can participate in what we will hope will be a beneficial evolution for all of the parties concerned.

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The President, while in Western Europe, will also visit Italy, a country with which we have close ties and for which we have very special concerns, to exchange views with the leaders of Italy about their many complicated problems and to reaffirm a relationship to which we attach great importance.

Of course, he will see His Holiness, the Pope, for his first meeting with His Holiness, to discuss his general conceptions of how peace can be promoted in this period and the many humanitarian concerns of the Vatican.

Let me say a word about the meeting with President Sadat.

As we have repeatedly pointed out, as indeed we have not been permitted to forget, we are engaged in a reassessment of American policy in the Middle East. This is an effort that is not directed against any country or on behalf of any country.

It was made necessary by the suspension of shuttle diplomacy and of the last attempt to achieve an interim agreement between Israel and Egypt.

In the new circumstances that that fact created, with a high probability of the Geneva Conference being reconvened, it has been imperative for the United States to assess its policy in the light of these new conditions.

This process is going on, and in this process, personal meetings between the President and various of the leaders of the area play an essential role.

We intend to discuss with President Sadat, as we shall do later with Prime Minister Rabin, our conception of the alternative routes towards peace as they present themselves to us.

We will be eager to hear President Sadat's view as to what he considers the most effective means of promoting peace in the Middle East.

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After we have completed these discussions, one of two things is likely to happen. Either it will appear that the view of the two parties about method and perhaps about substance is sufficiently close so that negotiations can be encouraged or it will appear that they are still so far apart that it may be necessary for the United States to suggest a procedure or a way to proceed.

In either event, the President has repeatedly stated that the United States believes that a stalemate in the Middle East cannot lead to anything other than a catastrophe for all of the parties concerned, and the United States is determined that diplomatic progress be resumed.

The principal purpose of the reassessment is to devise means and to explore approaches that might facilitate this progress.

This, then, is the basic purpose of the President's trip. It is part of a foreign policy which, whatever recent disappointments, is based on the proposition that a major American role is essential to maintain the peace and to promote progress in the world.

And the United States will play this role both in a general sense and in a particular sense in certain regions.

This is the attitude with which the President is undertaking this trip, and he is hopeful that it will contribute to the objectives that I have outlined here.

Now, if you agree, let us take the questions in the sequence that we suggested, first about the trip, the West European part of the trip, then about the Middle East part of the trip, and then any general questions that you might have.

Q Will the President find, Mr. Secretary, in Western Europe widespread doubts about U.S. will and purpose in the world now as a result of the MAYAGUEZ and the things the President talked about yesterday?

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SECRETARY KISSINGER: I wouldn't think that as a result of the MAYAGUEZ the President is going to find widespread --

Q No, I mean, will the doubts be dispelled or partly dispelled by that?

SECRETARY KISSINGER: I think that there are questions in many West European countries -- not necessarily in all, but in many -- about the impact on the United States of the events of recent months and about the significance for other areas of the way in which our involvement in Indochina, and I think these questions exist whether they are formally articulated or not.

They can be removed to some extent by words, and to a greater extent by actions, but in this atmosphere it is important for the President to have an opportunity to sketch out a direction in which we can move together.

MAYAGUEZ should not be overdramatized. It was important that the United States demonstrated that there was a point beyond which it could not be pushed, and it was a useful thing to have done. It will not of itself create the conditions that are necessary to deal with the situation that I have described.

Q Mr. Kissinger, were you able to tell Foreign Minister Antunes last week that he could expect the NATO summit meetings to discuss, among other things, the conditions under which Portugal might have to be excluded from NATO, as the President alluded to yesterday, or were you as surprised as some of your colleagues in the State Department by the firmness of the President's remarks on that subject?

SECRETARY KISSINGER: I don't know about my colleagues in the State Department, but if they had been talking to me, which is not always guaranteed, then they could not have been surprised.

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I share the President's views on this matter, and what the President was pointing out was the anomaly of a Communist-dominated Government being part of NATO. He was not saying that the Portuguese Government now is Communist dominated. In what way this particular issue will be discussed in Brussels remains to be seen.

I would expect that it will come up more naturally in bilateral talks between the President and his colleagues at a plenary session, and I might say that I have certainly expressed our concerns to the Portuguese Foreign Minister, and our views on this matter have not been kept secret from anybody.

Q A follow up on that. Is he going to ask them to discuss conditions under which Portugal should be excluded from the Alliance?

SECRETARY KISSINGER: I doubt that this will be put formally before the Alliance. I think the President was pointing out a problem which will not go away simply by being ignored. He did not say that the problem had in fact already arisen.

He was speaking about trends. He, as you know, is meeting with the Portuguese Prime Minister and Foreign Minister and one other member of the Portuguese delegation.

We wish Portugal well. We hope that Portugal will have a democratic evolution in conformity with its own national aspirations, so we are not going to Brussels with the intention of producing a confrontation with Portugal or over Portugal, but we also believe that there are certain trends that will not disappear by being ignored or by assuming the most favorable possible outcome.

Q Mr. Secretary, are implying that -- you talk about bilateral discussions, that there are certain things that could not be discussed with the Portuguese and, therefore, must be discussed with other countries, such as secrecy in NATO military matters and other matters which are too sensitive to be treated in public.

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SECRETARY KISSINGER: I am not implying that, but it is a fact that an Alliance, which is designed to prevent a Communist attack on Western Europe, acquires unique features. If it includes in its deliberations a Government of which many members are Communist, that is a fact -- we are not creating this.

Whether this is the occasion to raise that issue formally I would question, but that it is an issue can also not be questioned, and what the President did yesterday was to call the attention of his colleagues to this problem.

It does not mean that it will be raised at the meeting in any explicit form.

Q Mr. Secretary, if Portugal goes Communist in the literal sense, would you then recommend that it be removed from NATO?

SECRETARY KISSINGER: If Portugal goes Communist, then we have obviously a situation which was not foreseen when NATO was originally formed, and then to pretend that this is something that need not be considered is an absurdity.

What exactly will be done under those circumstances requires the most intense consultation with our European allies, but that it requires intense consultation goes without saying.

Q Mr. Secretary, at what point would you determine that this Government had gone Communist? There is a nebulous situation there, with several parties involved. What I would like to know is, at what point do you decide that this Government is Communist dominated?

SECRETARY KISSINGER: When we think it is Communist dominated (Laughter), and I think that there will be sufficient objective indications of that fact.

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Q Mr. Secretary, can you say what was the response of the Prime Minister to your observation?

SECRETARY KISSINGER: I had a very friendly talk with him, and indeed, as we announced on that occasion, I invited him to visit the United States within the next three months, and he accepted.

Q But did he show a will of his Government to remain in NATO in any case?

SECRETARY KISSINGER: Yes, he indicated a desire to stay in NATO.

Can we talk about some other problem except for Portugal?

Q Mr. Secretary, in the broader European questions about the American commitment, did you find in your contacts and in your recent trips that there are doubts about the American President being able to push his foreign policy through the American Congress, and how are you planning to resolve those doubts when you go to Brussels?

SECRETARY KISSINGER: I have the impression that the relations between the Executive and the Legislative are of profound concern to many other countries. I found that on this trip; I found it at the OAS meeting previously here in Washington. I say this without assigning blame for this state of affairs. This is a fact.

Now, I believe that this relationship is in the process of improvement, and that many of the conditions that produced the tensions, such as Watergate and the war in Vietnam, now being behind us, the possibility for a much more creative cooperation exists.

This would certainly be our attitude. In any event, the President will make clear to his colleagues what the Executive conceives our proper responsibilities to be, and we believe -- and we certainly do fervently hope -- that we can obtain the necessary Congressional support.

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Q By all accounts, the European allies are not very enthusiastic about bringing Spain into a closer relationship with NATO. Does the President have any new arguments, new pressures, or do you expect any change in his attitude?

SECRETARY KISSINGER: No, we have stated our view on the matter. I don't think that this will be an issue that we need to raise with additional intensity. We have made our view clear over the weeks, and we have made our view clear by the trip that the President is taking to Spain, and this may be a matter that will have to be left to time.

Q What is our Government's attitude towards a new security arrangement with Spain?

SECRETARY KISSINGER: We are in the process of negotiating this, of negotiating the extension of the basic agreement, and in the process of these negotiations that will be looked at.

Q Mr. Secretary, is the President going to see any members of the opposition in Madrid?

SECRETARY KISSINGER: The President's schedule is not yet finally settled, and we will announce it when it is.

Q Mr. Secretary, wholly apart from the stated intention of the U.S. reassessment of Middle East policy, isn't it true that it has now taken on a life of its own? I mean, isn't it true that it is being largely viewed, particularly by Israel, as a U.S. tool, a U.S. lever, a U.S. pressure device?

SECRETARY KISSINGER: Can I set this question aside for one moment? I will answer this as the first question on the Middle East part. Let me see if there are two or three more questions on the European part, and then I will take it.

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Q Mr. Secretary, will the President confer with President Giscard, and what about France's role?

SECRETARY KISSINGER: President Giscard has agreed to come to the dinner for NATO heads of state, and heads of government that is being given by the King of the Belgians. In connection with the visit of President Giscard for that purpose the President will have a bilateral meeting with the French President, and we look forward to that.

Q Mr. Secretary, in the meeting of NATO in Brussels, could this not be the beginning of the end of NATO as we knew it before, a divergence of interests between the United States and Western Europe in coming years -- the social, political, economic order of things?

SECRETARY KISSINGER: I expect the opposite to happen. I expect that this meeting of NATO will stress some new dimensions for NATO and will usher in a period of new creativity.

Let me take one more question on the West European part, and then I will take your question, if I can still remember it. I will remember it.

Q Mr. Secretary, I would like to question why it is necessary to reassure the NATO allies of the American commitment in view of the fact that that commitment to NATO has been solid since the end of World War II, laying aside Vietnam, which was not a formal treaty commitment?

Why is it necessary to reassure the NATO allies when it has been the British which have been cutting back on their troops, the French which pulled out of NATO, the Greeks which pulled out of NATO, and the Turks which want to throw the U.S. military bases out of Turkey?

SECRETARY KISSINGER: Not without provocation.

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Q Well, that is debatable with the Congress, not me, sir.

I am wondering why we have to go hat in hand to reassure them.

SECRETARY KISSINGER: We are not going hat in hand to reassure them, and I did not say we are going to Europe to reassure NATO. If you read the record of what I said, I am sure you will find that I stated three major purposes, that the question of reassurance arose in response to queries that were put to me.

I stated that NATO is in need of adaptation to new circumstances in its original purposes, that NATO is in need of adaptation to new conditions that have arisen due to the interdependence of the modern economy, and that NATO is in need of a formal consideration of the relationship between its security objectives and the attempt to ease tensions with the East.

Those are the three principal purposes. If in the process reassurance results, that is fine, but quite apart from the issue of Indochina, the President's intention was, in any event, to have a meeting with the leaders of Western Europe.

Now, let me take the question --

Q Let me try it again, if you didn't get it the first time.

SECRETARY KISSINGER: No, I got the point. Let me see what I remember.

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Q Do you expect to pursue the date for the European Security Conference?

Q What was the question?

SECRETARY KISSINGER: The date for the European Security Conference does not depend on the United States. The date for the European Security Conference will be determined by the negotiations that are now going on in Geneva in which there are a number of issues still outstanding on confidence-building measures, on human contacts and on post-conference machinery.

In each of these, the West has put forward certain initiatives and is either awaiting the responses or analyzing responses that it has just received. The date of the Security Conference cannot be settled independent of the progress of the negotiations and the best way to speed that conference would be if the Soviet Union considered carefully some of these considerations that we had put forward.

Now, to the Middle East. The question, as I understood it, was whether reassessment has developed a life of its own and whether it is not conceived or intended as a pressure upon Israel.

Well, as I have said before, my friend, Abba Eban, used to say that Israel considers objectivity a hundred percent support of its position.

We did not intend this assessment either as pressure or as support for any party. It was made inevitable by the suspension of the negotiations and by the potential collapse of the interim approach. With Geneva becoming a probable outcome, it was imperative for the United States to consider procedures and substance all the more so as it is the view of the Administration, which we have certainly not kept secret for years, that progress towards peace in the Middle East is in the interest of the parties concerned, in the interest of the West and in the interest of the United States.

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As such, it is not directed against any country. It is not intended as a pressure upon any country. It is as objective a look as we can get from our best conception of the American and world interest in this matter, of what is required to promote peace, and of course, the United States has been committed to the existence of Israel as part of such a just peace.

Q Mr. Secretary, as I understood you, you said the United States will be willing to put forward new proposals if neither of the principals came up with their own proposals for establishing progress.

SECRETARY KISSINGER: At least as to procedures.

Q Well, that was part of the question, actually. Do you mean to suggest that the United States will produce proposals in terms of its bilateral or multilateral relationships with the parties themselves or for Geneva, or in what context?

SECRETARY KISSINGER: That depends on which route is chosen. It will be impossible for the United States to be at Geneva without expressing some view on the subject at some time.

Q What are the chances of your renewing shuttle diplomacy, then?

SECRETARY KISSINGER: We cannot judge which method will be most appropriate until the President has had an opportunity to talk to some of the parties principally involved.

Q Mr. Secretary, will the letter from the Senators giving the broad base support for Israel have any effect on your dealings with President Sadat or Prime Minister Rabin?

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SECRETARY KISSINGER: We will take seriously expressions from many quarters. At least some of the statements in that letter contain the ambiguities that have been at the heart of Middle East negotiations for many years and therefore, as we move more deeply into these negotiations, we will have to discuss with the Senate as precisely what meaning is to be given to phrases such as "secure and recognized frontiers," which are also part of Security Council Resolution 242.

Q If President Sadat brings up this latter, queries what effect it has on you and American policy, what is your answer?

SECRETARY KISSINGER: Our answer will be that we are taking into account the views of many groups and, of course, Congressional views with considerable seriousness, that after we have made a decision, we will discuss it at great length with the Senate and with the whole Congress, and that in the meantime, we have to proceed according to our best judgment of the situation.

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Q Mr. Secretary, why do you believe the Syrians moved to extend the UN mandate for six months, which puts them out of synchronization with the Egyptians, and what will the impact of that action be on the next three to six months?

SECRETARY KISSINGER: I will answer that question, but if we could leave non-Egyptian and Israeli questions out until I get through the second part of my answers. But, I will answer that question.

Q On the Egyptians?

SECRETARY KISSINGER: The impact is that it gives some more time for a development of peace initiatives less closely geared to imminent deadlines than seemed possible a few weeks ago and, therefore, we welcome this step.

Helen, did you have a question?

Q Yes, I did. On the question of over-dramatizing MAYAGUEZ, don't you think that the Administration had a big part in that? Also, you were the one who said it was a bonus and benefits.

SECRETARY KISSINGER: That it was what?

Q A bonus and benefits.

SECRETARY KISSINGER: No, I said our purpose was to free the ship and the crew, and if there were any collateral benefits, that was a bonus, but not the primary purpose. That is a different thing from saying that that was the exclusive purpose.

Q Don't you think that it is being magnified into a major foreign policy representation?

SECRETARY KISSINGER: I believe that it was explained in response to very intense queries. I have stated our view and what has happened previously. I don't want to --

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Q Mr. Secretary, do you believe that the two super powers will inevitably impose a settlement on the sides in the Middle East if both sides will not come with new proposals?

SECRETARY KISSINGER: We have not thought it wise to impose a settlement, and our policy has been designed to enable the parties concerned to negotiate the structure of a just and lasting peace.

Q Mr. Secretary, does the President plan mainly to listen during the Sadat and Rabin meeting and, if so, what is your expectation for any new position, new concessions, being made by either man?

The reason I ask the question is that it suggests that the reassessment may hinge on the outcome of those talks.

SECRETARY KISSINGER: No, I think the President will both talk and listen. He will give to both sides our assessment of the situation, and it will be as close to identical to both sides as we can make it.

He will then obviously ask their views on their assessment of the situation, and our reassessment or at least the conclusions we will draw will depend obviously to an important extent on the answers we receive.

Q Mr. Secretary, President Sadat has said publicly now several times that he intends to press President Ford for an answer to what the American position is on supporting Israel, either in the present situation or back to the 1967 borders. What will the President say to President Sadat, or what do you think about that question?

SECRETARY KISSINGER: If I tell you that, maybe President Sadat won't come to the meeting. (Laughter)

I think we are in no position to give answers to final settlement until we have completed the assessment we are now making.

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Q Since we have already had no assessment on Mr. Gromyko, can you tell us a little bit of what he indicated to you was the Soviet position on the Middle East?

SECRETARY KISSINGER: I think that the Soviet Union realizes that it is one thing to start a conference, it is another to bring it to a conclusion, and I think every party concerned so far has realized that it was less complicated to talk about Geneva than to bring it off.

Now that Geneva has become a very probable outcome, I think it behooves the two co-chairmen to discuss what steps they can take to bring about the best atmosphere for talks and the best possible outcome for such talks, and this is the spirit within which we had our preliminary exchanges.

As you know, Foreign Minister Gromyko and I plan to meet again in July, and I think at that time, after we have substantially completed our assessment, we will be in a position to be more specific.

Q Mr. Secretary, you say Geneva is a probable outcome, but as you also point out, it is a lot of trouble getting it off the ground. First, we thought it was going to meet early in the summer. Now it appears that it may not be until late in the summer, and the Egyptians are saying possibly not until the end of the year.

Do you have any estimate of when Geneva will be?

SECRETARY KISSINGER: I think I will be in a better position to answer that question in July, after I meet with Foreign Minister Gromyko, and after the President has met with President Sadat and with Prime Minister Rabin and after we have talked to some of the other interested Arab parties.

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Q When you talk about Geneva, are you talking about it in the context we understood it when it first began, that this would be a negotiation or would it simply be a framework within which some variation of shuttle diplomacy might be able to work?

SECRETARY KISSINGER: I don't think I can add anything to the three possible options that the President outlined yesterday.

MR. NESSEN: Why not take just a couple more minutes, Mr. Secretary? You have been at it for about an hour.

SECRETARY KISSINGER: I haven't even gotten started yet. I will take two or three more questions.

Q How would you define the main stumbling block to an interim settlement between Israel and Egypt? Is it the issue of nonbelligerency?

SECRETARY KISSINGER: The issue of the last interim negotiation has taken on the form of the Japanese movie, Rashomon -- there are so many versions of it around now that I don't want to add to the general confusion.

I don't think there is any purpose served by reviewing the last negotiation, which takes on more epic proportions the longer one hears the various accounts. The major problem now is to focus on the future. That requires some stocktaking as to what the parties now conceive to be the essence of the problem as they now see it.

Once we understand that, then we can make some suggestions as to whether or how the deadlock might be broken, rather than go over again the last positions they had at that time, which under the pressure of events may now look somewhat different.

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Q Dr. Kissinger, you said that we have not thought it wise to impose a settlement. Do you have any reason to believe that we could impose a settlement that would be accepted unless it was acceptable to both sides?

SECRETARY KISSINGER: We believe that a settlement must emerge out of a process of negotiation between the two sides in some form, either directly or indirectly.

Q Mr. Secretary, in your meeting with Gromyko, was there any progress made on what appeared to be some differences on the Vladivostok SALT agreement or is that coming along, and do you expect to have something final this year, yet.

SECRETARY: The Vladivostok agreement settled most of the conceptual problems. It left open many of the technical issues in the implementation of the basic concepts. Being technical, these issues become extremely complicated. I believe that we are making progress in clarifying the issues and in narrowing the gap between the two sides.

I believe that the chances of completing the agreement this year are good, but it is a highly technical negotiation in which -- I don't want to disillusion you -- there is an enormous amount of consensus within our Government as to what is required, and we are moving in that direction now.

Q Mr. Secretary --

SECRETARY KISSINGER: I think, Bernie, you had a question.

Q The other Bernie.

MR. NESSEN: Bernie Kalb.

SECRETARY KISSINGER: Oh, Bernie Kalb. I didn't even see him.

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Q Mr. Secretary, in this immediate post-Vietnam era, do you believe that the firmness of your reiterations to outstanding American commitments is matched by an equal firmness of the will of the American people to follow through on those commitments?

SECRETARY KISSINGER: Yes, I believe it is. I believe that the American people will support an American foreign policy designed to preserve global peace and to bring about conditions of progress which reduce international tensions and general tensions.

I think this is a question in part of the leadership of the Administration, which we intend to exercise, and I believe also that with the end of some of the divisive debates which this country has been subjected to in recent years we are in a better position to obtain public support and indeed, we have a very large degree of public support for the kind of foreign policy that we have outlined.

THE PRESS: Thank you, Mr. Secretary.

END (AT 3:05 P.M. EDT)