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Memorandum of Conversation

1973-2-23, Sadat, Ismail, Nixon

DATE: February 23, 1973

HAK
Scowcroft
Howe
Saunders

SUBJECT: Middle East

PARTICIPANTS: H.E. Hafez Ismail, President Sadat's Advisor for National Security Affairs
Dr. Muhammad Hafez Ghanem, Special Advisor to President Sadat
Mr. Ahmad Khalil, Egyptian Minister in Washington
Mr. Abdul Hady Makhlouf, Mr. Ismail's Chef de Cabinet

The Secretary of State
Mr. Kenneth Rush, Deputy Secretary
Mr. Joseph J. Sisco, Assistant Secretary for Near Eastern and South Asian Affairs
Mr. Alfred L. Atherton, Jr., Deputy Assistant Secretary for Near Eastern and South Asian Affairs

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SUMMARY

During a cordial three-hour meeting and working lunch, the main thrust of Ismail's remarks was that Egypt was launching an effort, in which this meeting was an important preliminary step, to persuade the U.S. to change its policy in the Middle East to one which would not be based on what Egypt considers total support for Israel. This visit could be a "point of departure for happier relations."

With regard to peace settlement prospects, Ismail stressed that Egypt seeks a final settlement which would respect Egyptian

NEA:ALAtherton, Jr./hlk/2/24/73
(Drafting Office and Officer)

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sovereignty over all its territory and is not seeking "partial" or "independent" solutions. The Secretary described at length, with illustrations from the Vietnam and Berlin negotiations, the U.S. concept of negotiations as a process for discussing, without advance concessions, what appear to be irreconcilable positions in the search for solutions. In the Middle East context, negotiations must seek to reconcile concepts of territory and security. The Secretary emphasized that we also want a final and total Middle East settlement. We think an interim Canal agreement would move in the direction of such a settlement and that, if once this journey could be started, it would lead to a result in which Egypt would achieve most, if not all, of what it seeks. Referring to mistaken ideas about U.S. ability to "pressure" Israel, the Secretary said we do have influence with Israel but the way to exercise this is in the context of a give-and-take negotiating process between the parties.

The Secretary probed particularly and repeatedly for any indication that Ismail might have new ideas about how to formulate the linkage between an interim agreement and a final settlement under Resolution 242. Ismail revealed no new elements in the Egyptian position. Responding to the Secretary's comments on negotiations, Ismail spent some time explaining how the Western concept of negotiations, when there is no assurance that the outcome will be satisfactory, is alien to the Arab world. By offering recognition in return for Israeli acceptance of the old international boundary, Ismail said Egypt is offering Israel the best chance it has ever had; one cannot imagine what variants of intercourse might be possible once there was a peace agreement.

The Secretary and Ismail agreed that no basic changes in position were to be expected from this meeting. In both his private remarks and replies to press queries, however, Ismail made clear that he viewed his visit as the beginning of an improved atmosphere and tone in the U.S.-Egyptian dialogue. END OF SUMMARY.

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Mr. Ismail expressed appreciation for this meeting, saying he knew the Secretary was busy preparing for his trip to Paris. The Secretary replied that nothing was more important to him than the Middle East. He wanted first to reiterate his earlier expressions of sympathy on the downing of the Libyan airliner over Sinai, which had been a great shock and tragedy. From a public point of

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view, this incident might make today's talks seem more difficult, but it was important that they take place. He knew it was more difficult for Mr. Ismail to come under these circumstances and was pleased that he had come.

Ismail thanked the Secretary for his expressions of sympathy. Egypt, he said, had expected such acts and believed that Israel would seek to torpedo peace efforts when Egypt was holding talks with the major powers. Israel's latest attack on Lebanon was an example. Egypt was prepared to face all this, however, and had given no thought to cancelling his visit. He regretted to say that perhaps the airliner tragedy served Egyptian interests; it showed that Israel does not want peace. Unless the U.S. does something, today's meeting would be repeated in 1983. Ismail added, however, that the present situation cannot last.

Ismail continued that, with all respect for the U.S. position on the ceasefire, the fact it had lasted 30 months was not cause for gratification. The ceasefire was becoming a burden, and ways must be found to break it up or to move toward peace. There had been important developments since last summer: the Soviet presence, originally requested by Egypt, was gone; the international community had expressed its impatience. Egypt knows that resolutions do not impress Israel, but it needs such expressions of support. All of this, however, had had no effect on U.S. policy which is out of tune in the area and does not satisfy the realities of the situation. A major shift in U.S. policy is overdue.

In spite of its problems, Ismail said, Egypt does not seek a "partial" or "independent" solution and is not prepared to concede its sovereignty. Ismail continued that he was not coming to the U.S. to bargain about Egyptian relations with other powers. (The Secretary interjected that he understood this.) Egypt has taken a position of balance and of independence and is not seeking to play one country against another. Egyptian-U.S. and Egyptian-Soviet relations are both conducted within the same Egyptian policy. If the U.S. is prepared to move toward the Egyptian position, this would be welcomed; if not, there is nothing Egypt can do about it.

Ismail continued that Egypt believes this visit -- the honor of seeing the President and the Secretary -- can be a point of departure for happier relations. Egypt has no animosity for the U.S. But the U.S. and Egypt have had differences for 15 years. These began with the Eisenhower Doctrine. There were also

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differences over Egyptian-Soviet relations -- relations which Egypt will continue in its cultural, political and economical interests. Egypt will not in future, however, accept a Soviet presence on Egyptian soil. There have also been differences, Ismail said, over Egyptian-Arab relations. Yet Egypt has made important contributions to the Arab world, and it is in the U.S. interest to have a strong, healthy and prosperous Middle East to which Egypt can contribute. The U.S. and Egypt should not differ over Egypt's presence in the area; Egypt is a stabilizing factor. Ismail said he believes it is also U.S. policy to have a healthy and happy Arab world.

In all of this, Ismail said, the problem of Israel stands out. In 1969 certain forces had encouraged the U.S. to speak of an evenhanded policy. In Egypt's view, the motives preventing adoption of such a policy no longer apply. Egypt views this visit as an important preliminary step in the effort to persuade the U.S. to change its policy. By this, Ismail said, he means that the U.S. should no longer support whatever Israel wants. If that support continues, Israel will never leave the Suez Canal. Israel now gets all it wants from the U.S. and, in addition, will soon have its own production capabilities for a 500-mile, surface-to-surface missile and for nuclear weapons. In the end, not only Egypt but the world will suffer.

The Secretary responded that he appreciated hearing Mr. Ismail's remarks and would like to make a few preliminary comments. First, the United States Government and people have no antagonism toward Egypt and understand its importance in history. Secondly, the United States Government from the President on down has friendly feelings toward Egyptians as a people. The Secretary said he is an admirer of President Sadat and has said so in conversations in many capitals. Recalling that both President Nixon and he were in the Eisenhower Administration when it acted at the time of the 1956 Suez Crisis, the Secretary said Egypt is speaking to friends. Third, we know that Egyptians see us as a friend of Israel. Sometimes when Egyptians talk to us, we feel as though they think they are talking to Israelis. This is not correct. We have in fact had many differences with Israel. We do support Israel's right to exist, and we admire President Sadat for saying he is prepared in a peace agreement to recognize Israel's sovereignty.

The Secretary said he realizes there can be no dramatic changes as a result of this visit but agrees it is a good point of

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departure. There is no use in talking about the past; everyone knows everyone's point of view on that, even if we don't always agree.

The Secretary said he wanted to make clear that we have never thought about the Middle East problem except in terms of a total, final solution. Anything less would simply lead to a repetition of the same old song and we would be in the middle between our Arab and Israeli friends. The tensions caused by the absence of a settlement do not serve our interests. We have been able to make some progress in every other area of the world without concern for popularity and face-saving. While this progress is the result of a slow and painful process and many problems remain, we think the world today is in a better frame of mind.

Concluding his preliminary comments, the Secretary said he is delighted that Mr. Ismail is here; we want Egypt to understand the U.S. viewpoint and we want to understand Egypt's.

(The meeting then continued over lunch.)

Continuing the conversation, the Secretary said that we recognize there is a problem of establishing confidence between us, but regardless of this it should be clear where U.S. interests lie. Another problem is that words tend to take on special meanings. For example, we have never spoken of an interim "settlement;" we have always made clear an interim agreement must be linked to a final settlement through Resolution 242. It should not be impossible to devise this linkage. Another problem, the Secretary said, is with the meaning of the word "just." If one side gets all it wants, this will be injust to the other side.

Reverting to the interim agreement, Mr. Sisco said we have never seen it as an end in itself. If it does not lead to a final settlement, this will leave irredentist sentiments and the seeds of another war.

Mr. Rush, citing his experience in the Berlin negotiations, commented that at the beginning of negotiations, no one can say how they will come out; neither side is prepared to give what seems needed. The Secretary added that this does not mean the two sides must meet at the 50-50 point. But a process of talking can bring new ideas into the picture. As an example, he cited how we and the Peoples Republic of China had dealt with the Taiwan problem.

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Dr. Ghanem suggested that the Middle East may differ from the Berlin and the Taiwan situations. In the Middle East there is Security Council Resolution 242 which can be considered a "full and complete" solution.

The Secretary agreed that no analogy is perfect but said all these examples show the advantage of negotiations. Entering negotiations is not a concession, but the process of negotiations is the only way to seek solutions. The Secretary emphasized he was not discussing face-to-face negotiations but a process.

Mr. Ismail said that, assuming there was agreement in an interim agreement on the need for "full implementation" of Resolution 242, he must ask what political or military levers would Egypt have to push Israel toward full implementation? He could see none after the first phase had occurred; the Canal would be open, the military forces would be disengaged and everyone would be happy. The U.S. has said no troops can cross the Canal in this phase; there would be none on the Canal's west bank either since with the return of Egyptian refugees the military installations would need to be disbanded. What pressure would there be on Israel to withdraw further? Would there be a commitment of the five powers? The interim agreement, Ismail said, reminds him of 1949 since it sounds like an armistice agreement. After the armistice agreement was signed, Egyptians and Israelis met face to face at Lausanne and they had the Palestine Conciliation Commission, but Israel never recognized that the armistice lines were something from which it should withdraw. Today, an interim agreement as the U.S. sees it, achieved through proximity talks without pre-conditions under U.S. auspices, would be a formal agreement -- perhaps with supervisory forces -- just like the armistice agreement. A further problem is that Egypt would have to agree with Israel about reopening the Canal. The 1888 Constantinople Convention gives Egypt sovereignty over the Canal so it cannot negotiate this question with Israel.

The Secretary said these are all good questions. They could be discussed in the negotiations and should not be difficult to resolve. Ismail rejoined that, if Egypt accepts the principle of discussing the reopening of the Canal with Israel, it will be stuck with it from then on. The Secretary said ways could be found around this problem -- e.g., they could sign separate pieces of paper just as we had done in Paris.

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The Secretary said he wanted to try to explain our concept of negotiations. If one begins by saying that all substantive and procedural questions are hopeless, then that is the end of the matter. Hence there is need for a process, which may or may not succeed. This has worked in all kinds of situations, and we have had no idea at the start how the process would end. We are convinced that neither the U.S. nor others can write a blueprint for Middle East peace. Resolution 242, which Dr. Ghanem had mentioned, contains a set of principles but each side has its own interpretation. Ghanem agreed that 242 was a set of principles but said Egypt could not accept that any doubts should be raised about a return to the international border. An interim agreement would raise such doubts. Mr. Rush commented that Egypt can enter negotiations with the position that the international border must be the final border; this would involve no compromise at all. The Secretary added that our view of negotiations is that one begins to talk without giving up anything.

Resolution 242, the Secretary continued, contains two conflicting principles: (1) withdrawal from occupied territories, on which Egypt insists, and (2) secure and recognized boundaries, on which Israel insists. These need not necessarily be irreconcilable, even if they seem so at the start. From the Israeli viewpoint, the security aspect would be less of a problem if the two sides learned to live together and acquired some mutual confidence; it is a question of frame of mind. Israel makes a valid point when it says if Arabs and Israelis are to live together, they must talk together. From the Arab point of view, the Secretary said, there is fear of Israeli expansionism and they want to be satisfied in this regard before entering an agreement. The U.S. will support Egypt's opposition to expansionism. Even beyond the international border? Dr. Ghanem asked. The Secretary replied that he did not want to comment on this point because then we would be a party to the negotiations.

The Secretary then said he wanted to explain how we view the interim agreement. Resolution 242 describes where the parties should be headed, not precisely where they will land. Clearly there must be "considerable withdrawal." But given all the complex problems, we do not see how they can all be solved at once, just as we could not solve all the problems in Indo-China at once. At the same time, the status quo is not in anyone's interest. An interim agreement would be a first step; it would mean progress in Egypt's direction, involving Egyptian sovereignty over the Canal. Mr. Sisco added that Israel has

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never questioned Egyptian sovereignty over the Canal. Moving in this direction, the Secretary said, would create momentum. An interim agreement must (1) provide a step toward a final settlement, (2) be linked to Resolution 242 and (3) provide for on-going negotiations which must follow immediately. On the question of an Egyptian presence East of the Canal which Ismail had raised, this should be a subject for negotiations; some in Israel have said they would not rule it out.

Mr. Sisco said that negotiations on an interim agreement would facilitate negotiations between Jordan and Israel, and we had told King Hussein this. We know President Sadat has made clear he needs a commitment to total withdrawal, but we have said since 1971 that Israel will not give this in an interim agreement. What undertaking short of that could get the process started? The Secretary added that we are prepared to look for a formula which would make clear Egypt was not giving up its position and not making concessions. We would like to pursue with Egypt the question of whether a formula can be found on the question of linkage between an interim agreement and a final settlement.

The Secretary then recalled President Sadat had told him we should "squeeze" Israel. We have never accepted that word but we got the point. In fact, however, whatever influence major powers have must be exercised carefully and privately and in circumstances where there is a specific impasse. The U.S. has influence with Israel, but the way to bring it to bear without twisting arms is in the context of a negotiating process between the parties.

On the linkage question, the Secretary said, nothing is impossible except Israeli agreement to "complete and total withdrawal." That has been the problem since 1967. Mr. Khalil asked if that had not been the interpretation of Resolution 242 in 1967. Mr. Sisco said it had been the Egyptian interpretation. Ismail said it had been the UN interpretation, the interpretation of Secretary Rusk in 1968, of Secretary Rogers in 1969 and of Jarring in 1971 -- only subject to security arrangements at Sharm al-Shaykh.

Noting that the U.S. says it cannot get an Israeli commitment to the international border at the outset, Ismail said Egypt has

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coupled this with undertakings to "peace," "international forces," and all the other things outlined by Secretary Rogers in 1969. He hoped the U.S. understood what it meant for Egypt to say these things. Ismail continued that he realized Israel could not move at once to the international border and that there must be a phased withdrawal, but it must be a rapid one. Otherwise Israel would create problems and the whole process would bog down. Egypt has no confidence in Israel, only in the UN and the big five. Israel, on the other hand, has no confidence in anyone.

The Secretary said it was clear that the parties were no closer together on the basic issues. Egypt wants to know where it will come out before starting negotiations. We say this is not possible but Egypt should start the journey. We want to see Egypt complete the journey, but the only way is to begin. Can Egypt think of some device to get negotiations started? We do not care how the process starts. We have been active in support of talks on an interim agreement because President Sadat and Prime Minister Meir asked us to be. We understand Egypt's problem -- that an interim agreement must be just a step toward a final agreement and that it not involve any prior concessions. We think there are signs of greater flexibility in Israel -- an increasing recognition that the status quo is not satisfactory.

Recalling that Mr. Sisco has called the Middle East problem a history of lost opportunities, Ismail said the U.S. missed an opportunity in 1971. The Secretary said he would not disagree. Ismail commented that the Israelis had then distorted Sadat's proposal. In 1971, the Secretary recalled, we had said we would do our part but had made clear we could not get prior Israeli agreement to total withdrawal. Our position did not change and has always been the same. In 1969, the Secretary continued, we said it was necessary for the parties to negotiate agreements with respect to Sharm al-Shaykh, demilitarized zones and Gaza; in that context we had spoken of the international border. That position represented our assessment, but Israel never agreed. We never used the phrase "total withdrawal;" we said the parties should negotiate the difficult issues just cited and then the international border would be okay. Negotiations are necessary to reconcile concepts of territory and security. Israel has placed more emphasis on territory than we have, but clearly some pieces of territory are important for security -- e.g., Sharm al-Shaykh. Security also depends,

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however, on how the parties relate to each other and how they live together. There have been years of hostility which makes this difficult. President Sadat's willingness to sign a peace agreement is important, but there are others such as the fedayeen who still talk about destroying Israel.

The Secretary then said he wanted to return to his earlier question: Is there any formulation that would make it possible to begin negotiations? Ismail said he was reminded of an Egyptian railway official who had devised the idea of a "surprise train" which would leave Cairo each day and passengers would not know where it would terminate -- whether in Alexandria or Port Said or some other place. The destination would be a surprise. Egypt, Ismail said, cannot get on a "surprise train."

Meanwhile, Ismail continued, Israel was taking provocative actions, building settlements on Egyptian territory such as that of Rafah. The imposition of Israel in the Middle East was the responsibility of the UN and the major powers. Now it is up to them to define Israel's borders. Israel was never promised any Egyptian or Syrian territory. The major powers committed a crime against the Arabs, and what is now involved is a question of principle. The Arabs are not Europeans who have had experience in exchanging territory and populations. Egypt cannot be fitted into Western concepts of defeat and victory. It will be unfortunate, if there is no final settlement which puts Israel back where it belongs. It will be a sick Middle East and a burden to all. It is not an insult to the Arabs if two and one-half million Israelis defy the world.

Noting Ismail's statement that questions of principle are involved, the Secretary said the U.S. also has principles we are proud of: we believe in reconciliation, in helping our enemies after a war; we helped rebuild Germany and Japan, even though there was no doubt how World War II started. We respect Egypt's principles. But looking to the future, the question remains how to solve the problem if you do not talk to the people with whom you have the problem. We think almost all of what Egypt wants -- he was not saying "all," the Secretary emphasized -- is achievable through discussions.

Ismail replied that Egypt is offering Israel the best chance it has had by agreeing to recognize it. Once there was an agreement, no one can imagine what variants of intercourse might be

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possible. But Israel wants to have its cake and eat it too.

The Secretary replied that Egypt would not be asked to make peace in an interim agreement. In saying it is prepared to sign a peace agreement, Egypt has not made any concession; it has simply made an offer. Ismail replied this was neither a concession nor an offer -- it was part of Resolution 242. But how can the problem be solved without negotiations? the Secretary asked. Ismail replied there can be no negotiations while Israel occupies Egyptian territory since Egypt would then be at a big disadvantage. In that case, the Secretary said, there is an impasse that cannot be overcome.

Dr. Ghanem commented that Israel has said it will not return to the international border, whereas Egypt says it must. Interim agreement talks would be held under the shadow of Israel's statement that it does not respect the international border and has the intention of expanding into Egyptian territory. It is Egypt, not Israel, which needs security.

The Secretary said this is the kind of thing to be worked out in negotiations. The problem is that Egypt's concept of negotiations is so different from ours that we make no headway. When Israel and Egypt tell us their positions and we relay these to the other, that is not negotiating, that is just stating irreconcilable positions. Take, for example, the question of "linkage;" it should be easy to work out. The U.S. would not urge Egypt to seek a formula which we did not think would meet its political needs -- perhaps not all of them but Egypt would be better off than it is now. The alternative is more war. An interim agreement offers a good possibility which could lead to security and dignity for the foreseeable future. This was not originally our idea, but we are willing to help. We want President Sadat to understand that we are anxious to start and we think an interim agreement would lead to a successful conclusion. We think there are inherent imperatives for progress if the process could be started. "We will do our damndest." We find it frustrating that this is the only area where we have been unable to get people talking. Ismail laughed "change the people."

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(The meeting then adjourned briefly to the Secretary's office.)

Referring to how we should handle press queries about these talks, the Secretary said it is important not to raise undue expectations. Responsible Egyptians understand this, Ismail said. They have heard that the U.S. position has not changed. The Secretary said he hoped it would be possible to strike a hopeful note about our relations -- to say we had good, frank discussions and look forward to keeping channels open. Mr. Ismail's visit was an important event in itself. It does not make sense not to have good relations.

Mr. Sisco said there was no animosity toward Egypt in America. Ismail responded that it is important to remember that the Egyptian people think the basic problem is American support for Israel. Even America's friends in the Arab world think this; King Faisal has problems in facing his own people. The U.S. is making a big mistake if it thinks it can have friends and interests in the Arab world while supporting Israeli retention of all occupied territory. The Secretary responded that this is not our policy. We, of course, want friends in the Arab world, and we think a number of them understand and appreciate our policy.

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WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

1973-11-14, Sadat, Nixon, Russia

MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

PARTICIPANTS: President Nixon
Academician Yevgeniy Fedorov, Co-Chairman, US/USSR Joint Environmental Committee
Dr. Yevgeny Chazon, Deputy Minister for Health
Amb. Anatoliy F. Dobrynin, Soviet Ambassador
Russell E. Train, Council on Environmental Quality
Lt. General Brent Scowcroft, Deputy Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs

DATE AND TIME: Wednesday, November 14, 1973
11:30 a.m.

PLACE: The Oval Office

/There was a photo session./

Dobrynin: I think they are moving very well on the environment. It is one of the best areas of our cooperation. But he can say it better.

Federov: This agreement signed by you and President Podgorny to protect the environment of the planet is now in the process of implementation. The first meeting was held last year. We are meeting now to discuss our work and to discuss plans for the future.

This work is very important. Attention to this problem in our government is very high, though not so acute as in yours.

We want to take steps to clean up our waters. Now we have better devices to clean things up. Our problems are not so sharp as they are here, but we are working hard on it. Our cooperation is going well.

I have another reason for being here. I have an arrangement with Bob White to exchange meteorological data. You have a hot line with our government; we have our own hot line to exchange data.

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Train: We have about thirty projects and have had about twenty exchange groups. They are doing very well.

The President: Exchange in itself is good. When we can also do good work, it is doubly good.

Federov: Pollution is a global problem.

The President: Our two countries are the leaders and we must take the lead here.

One thing concerning us now is the energy problem, which is setting us back. We are searching for clean energy so we can still keep jobs, etc.

Federov: I think it is possible to do both -- to have clean energy and to have progress.

The President: Natural gas is one area where we can make steps.

Federov: I asked Mr. Train to go to Baikal. It is not as dirty as the propaganda says.

Train: I have been testifying before the Congress and I will take Federov with me this afternoon.

Dobrynin: On your next trip, you may want to visit Baikal.

The President: Done.

Dobrynin: It is beautiful and it is a good place to relax.

The President: We never relax. I told General Secretary Brezhnev, whatever he wishes.

In the Middle East, we had a few difficulties, and the enemies of detente said we were finished, but we have straightened it out. Everyone threw up his hands and said "we haven't made progress." Nonsense. If we hadn't held talks, we would have had real problems. We are working in all these important areas like environment.

Tell General Secretary Brezhnev that we must not allow our two peoples -- our two great strong peoples -- to come into conflict. We must talk and

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argue, about all things -- the environment, European security, and the Middle East. We must go down different, but parallel roads. If we collide, no one will reach the heights, but we will go to the depths together. The environment is not so glamorous an issue, but it is very important. Dobrynin comes to me with problems -- and I came to him.

There are people in the world who are against detente. People fear condominium and we should allay those fears. But it is a fact that we both are great countries, and we must work together.

Dobrynin: This is Mr. Chazon. He is Deputy Minister of Health. He received an award from the American Heart Institute, where you got an award last year.

Fedorov: I have an atlas for you.

The President: I have something for you.

/Dobrynin took the President aside:/

Dobrynin: I think it important that our countries move forward together on the Middle East.

The President: I am determined on it. The Israelis can't do much until after their elections, but right after that we are determined to go for a permanent settlement. No more temporary arrangements. We can't afford another war; that just gets us into trouble with each other. I can assure you we will work with you. We will work on our ally and you must work on yours.

Dobrynin: Very good. I think it is very important.

/They rejoined the group./

The President: Here are some ash trays. They work. /To Chazon:/ You surely don't use them.

/There were parting pleasantries and the meeting ended./