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THE WHITE HOUSE

PRESS CONFERENCE
OF
JOSEPH SISCO
UNDER SECRETARY OF STATE
FOR POLITICAL AFFAIRS

KONGRESS HAUS PRESS CENTER

7:15 P.M. (Salzburg Time)

MR. NESSEN: Ladies and gentlemen, today's meeting between the Presidents lasted slightly more than an hour and a half, and to tell you about the meeting and answer your questions we have the Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs, Joseph Sisco.

MR. SISCO: With this group, I am not sure I am here to give a commencement address or whether I am going to give you a little briefing, but we will try to give you a little briefing.

First of all, so far as the participants are concerned, there were President Sadat and Vice President Murarak and Foreign Minister Fahmy on the Egyptian side, and the President and Secretary of State and myself on the American side.

This, as you know, was the first full meeting between the two Presidents, and we focused largely on the analysis of the present situation that exists in the Middle East.

President Sadat presented a full analysis of the situation as he sees it. President Ford, in turn, did likewise. Both sides laid out the various options, diplomatic options, before us, and we did not in these discussions reach any concrete stage or any concrete judgments.

These were preliminary explorations, and the conversation will continue at the next meeting tomorrow morning.

I will take any questions now.

MORE

Q Mr. Sisco, are we moving now to seek an overall general peace settlement in preference to the step-by-step process?

Q Question.

MR. SISCO: I will repeat the question so you can all hear it. The question is, are we moving towards an overall settlement rather than towards an interim agreement.

Is this your question?

Q Yes.

MR. SISCO: You will recall that in undertaking our reassessment that the principal focus of our reassessment has been on the diplomatic alternatives in the aftermath of the suspension of the negotiations last March.

We have drawn no conclusions. We have made no judgments with respect to the principal diplomatic alternatives.

You will also recall that we have stated that the consultations, the exchanges of views, which the United States has been having with the various participants are part of the overall reassessment with a view to helping us to determine what diplomatic course may prove to be most feasible.

You will recall that we had discussions in Washington with King Hussein and with the Prime Minister of Tunisia. The President has had this preliminary exchange with President Sadat today. Upon the completion of these discussions here in Salzburg, the President will be meeting with Prime Minister Rabin in Washington on the 11th and 12th of June, and this is all part of the overall review.

It is not anticipated that we would draw any final judgment until we have completed this consultation process. That is going on.

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Q Mr. Sisco, to follow that up, you mentioned that both sides presented their options, their ideas of the various options. Did President Ford's option include the possibility of an overall settlement?

MR. SISCO: To rephrase your question fairly, in preference to the interim agreement?

Q Yes.

MR. SISCO: Let me just say that the options were focused upon. We have not drawn any conclusions with respect to preferences. These are options that are under current discussion and there are no final judgments that have been made. These consultations will continue.

Q Mr. Sisco, how dissimilar were the analyses presented by the two Presidents, and will you amplify why, in either case?

MR. SISCO: Let me say, first of all --

Q Question.

MR. SISCO: Do you want to rephrase it again, because I don't want to recast the questions each time, if at all possible.

Q The question was, how similar, or how dissimilar, were the analyses presented by the two Presidents, and in either event, would Mr. Sisco explain why?

MR. SISCO: I don't want to get into the details of the discussions or the details of the various analyses. The thing that I would emphasize is that both Presidents are convinced that everything feasible should be done to try to make practical progress towards peace.

Q Mr. Sisco, how did the two gentlemen get on?

MR. SISCO: Let me say a word about that. Peter, the discussion was a very good one. It was very warm, very friendly. I think there was a very thorough exchange in this first hour and a half.

Q Mr. Sisco, how did President Sadat's position, as outlined today, differ from his position as it was in March when the talks broke down?

MR. SISCO: Jim, I don't want to get into the details of what each of the Presidents has had to say. I want to rest on the fact that each exchanged their own respective analyses and have begun to focus on the options.

Q You say, if his position is the same as it was --

Q That is right --

MR. SISCO: Again, I am not going to get into that question as to whether it is the same or whether it is different. This was a preliminary exchange. It focused on an analysis of the situation, the options were just exposed in a very preliminary way, and I think you will have to await the response on the answer to that question until there are further consultations between the two Presidents.

Q Mr. Sisco, what is the American attitude toward the establishment of a national home for Palestinians?

MR. SISCO: I don't think this is the time appropriate to get into the substance. We have said time and time again, insofar as the American position is concerned, that any durable peace has to take into account not only the views of the respective states, but also the legitimate interests of the Palestinians. This is what we have said time and again.

There is nothing new in that, but this is really not the time to get into that kind of a detail.

Q Mr. Sisco, does the United States intend to get into substantive talk during this meeting with President Sadat?

MR. SISCO: These are substantive exchanges that are going on right now.

Q I am sorry. Is the United States, in its conversations with President Sadat, willing to define the overall suggestions of the peace settlement?

MR. SISCO: Would you repeat the question, I can't hear you.

Q Is the United States willing, during its conversations with President Sadat -- not necessarily with us -- willing to go into the details of an overall settlement in the Middle East?

MR. SISCO: Two of the options being focused upon are one, the whole question of what possibilities there may be with respect to an interim agreement. A second option is what the possibilities are with respect to an overall settlement.

Marvin?

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Q Mr. Sisco, an American official was quoted as saying today that there are four elements that may be discussed here: borders, what the Arabs can do, the Palestinian question, and Jerusalem.

Were those four elements discussed today as part of the comprehensive discussion?

MR. SISCO: Let me repeat again that this was the first discussion. We did not get down to specifics, Marvin, and the answer to your question is no.

Q Do you, then, expect, sir, in these meetings to have discussions as detailed as borders and Jerusalem?

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Q Mr. Sisco, has President Ford informed President Sadat about the results? Have they reached some kind of principles?

MR. SISCO: I can only reiterate what I said a moment ago. We have not completed our reassessment. We have drawn no final judgments or conclusions. The discussions that are going on here today and tomorrow, the subsequent discussions with Prime Minister Rabin, are part of the overall review and they are intended to help the United States come to some judgment at the appropriate time.

Q Mr. Sisco, how were the talks reflected in the statement by the President in his toast at lunch today about aiding Egypt in its projects of progress? In other words, has it been envisaged or contained in the talks so far, some U.S. economic aid to Egypt?

MR. SISCO: The question was, have there been any discussions or has there been any focus -- I will rephrase it, if I can -- on the whole question of economic aid for Egypt.

Let me repeat once again that we have not gotten into the question of the overall relationships between the United States and Egypt. The discussions were focused on the diplomatic alternatives and the current situation that exists in the area.

Q We would like to know whether it is going to be taken up, this whole question of credits, and --

MR. SISCO: The question here, Helen would like to know, is when this will come up.

Q Will it come up during the discussion?

MR. SISCO: The question of our overall relationship, the question of our economic relationship to Egypt, will come up before the end of these discussions. The answer is yes.

Q Mr. Sisco, there will be two meetings between the Presidents tomorrow. Will President Ford meet Chancellor Kreisky again, or will Mr. Sadat meet Kreisky again tomorrow? Is it two meetings between the Presidents, or again a meeting between Kreisky and Ford, or Kreisky and Sadat?

MR. SISCO: I would have to review the schedule -- and, Ron, will someone check on this -- but from what I know of the schedule, there was another meeting scheduled between the two Presidents tomorrow morning. There is also a luncheon, which the United States will host tomorrow, and I can't go beyond that at the moment.

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Q Will there be a third one?

MR. SISCO: I don't know at this point.

Q Does everybody speak in the meeting, and who spoke the most?

MR. SISCO: I can assure you that the two Presidents carried by far the major burden of the discussions. There were a few comments made by others, but these were very limited in nature. The conversations were carried on by the two Presidents.

Q In their analyses of the options for both sides, did either President Sadat or President Ford mention the question of the duration of a statement of nonbelligerency?

MR. SISCO: You are now getting into the details of some of these options. There was not an opportunity in this preliminary meeting to do much more than to really lay out the options and, therefore, I can't address myself to that specific detail at the moment.

Q Is the Egyptian-American relations part of the American reassessment policy in the Middle East?

MR. SISCO: You will recall that when we announced the reassessment, we made several points: One, that its principal focus would be on an analysis of the situation that exists in the aftermath of the suspension of the negotiations in March; secondly, an examination of the diplomatic options.

We also said at that time that obviously we would be looking at our relationships with all of the countries in the area. This is inevitably part of the overall review.

Q Was there any substantive discussions on the possibility of resuming the Geneva Conference?

MR. SISCO: Again, you are getting into a good many of the details, and I want to repeat that there was not enough opportunity to get into a number of the specifics. I want to repeat, however, that the question of the renewal of the Geneva Conference was one of the options that was discussed in a very preliminary way.

THE PRESS: Thank you, Mr. Sisco.

END (AT 7:31 P.M. Salzburg Time)