

MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

6/23/73

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MEMORANDUM FOR: THE PRESIDENT'S FILES

FROM: HENRY A. KISSINGER

SUBJECT: President's meeting with General Secretary Leonid Brezhnev on Saturday, June 23, 1973 at 10:30 p.m. at the Western White House, San Clemente, California

PARTICIPANTS: The President
Leonid I. Brezhnev, General Secretary of the Central Committee, CPSU
Andrei A. Gromyko, Minister for Foreign Affairs
Anatoli F. Dobrynin, Ambassador to the United States
Dr. Henry A. Kissinger, Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs

[The principal subject of the meeting was the Middle East. At the close, there was a brief discussion of the exchange of letters on Soviet grain purchases, and of Brezhnev's forthcoming meeting with President Pompidou in Paris.]

[Pleasantries were exchanged at the beginning of the meeting regarding Brezhnev's visit to the West Coast of the United States.]

General Secretary Brezhnev: I would be glad to hear your views on the Middle East problem.

The President: The main problem in our view is to get talks started. Once we get them started, we would use our influence with the Israelis and you with the Arabs. But if we just talk about principles, we'll never get them. Dr. Kissinger and Mr. Gromyko seem to have agreed on five principles and disagreed on three. We can do nothing about it in the abstract; we need a concrete negotiation. Then we can be effective. I understand that Dr. Kissinger is redrafting the document.

Dr. Kissinger: Right. And we will send it to Camp David.

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General Secretary Brezhnev: The substance of the principles is essential, at least in confidential form. I fully understand that we cannot write into the communique all the details. But we must put this warlike situation to an end. The Arabs cannot hold direct talks with Israel without knowing the principles on which to proceed. We must have a discussion on these principles. If there is no clarity about the principles we will have difficulty keeping the military situation from flaring up. Everything depends on troop withdrawals and adequate guarantees. I can assure you that nothing will go beyond this room. But if we agree on Israeli withdrawals, then everything will fall into place.

The President: On a subject as difficult as this, we cannot say anything definitive. We will look at all your suggestions and incorporate them into the paper. Right, Henry?

Dr. Kissinger: Yes. We will send them to you in Camp David tomorrow.

The President: I am not trying to put you off. It is easy to put down principles in such a way that parties will not agree to talk. If we do it this way, then we can use our influence and you can use yours, to get a resolution of the differences. I can assure you I want a settlement -- but we don't get it just by talking principles.

General Secretary Brezhnev: [launching into a long speech] Proceeding from the logic of things, without an agreement on general principles we don't see how we can act. Last year we couldn't agree on a set of principles. We should find some form of words we can agree on. What are the principles? (1) Guarantees for Israel and the other states. This can be done in strict confidence. (2) We can ensure by the guarantees that there is no confrontation from the occupied territories. (3) Israeli withdrawal from Arab territories. (4) There will be unobstructed passage for all through the straits. And if we can get agreement on these principles we can then discuss how to use any influence on the contending parties. We should use our confidential channel with Dr. Kissinger and Ambassador Dobrynin. If we don't do that, we have no basis for using our influence. I agree with everyone present here that we can't say it in the communique. But we should know in what direction to act.

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We are reaching results as a result of our confidential exchanges. This is not a demand. But it is something we should do. It is necessary not only for the Arabs but for others too. As soon as there is a lasting peace, our diplomatic relations will be restored with Israel. We could agree on Vietnam. Why can't we do it here? Once the principles are agreed, we can go on. That is why I would like to know that we have reached agreement on principles. If we agree, the result will be a stronger peace in the area. But if the state of vagueness continues, the situation will deteriorate. Of course we are great powers and we can bring to bear our influence. But the principles are a minimum. If we can't reach agreement, it will undermine confidence in us. Peace must be worldwide. Our actions should be aimed at an enduring and lasting peace. I am trying to see things realistically. But to influence things we must know the principles on the basis of which we can do good work together.

The President: We can't settle this tonight. I want you to know I consider the Arab-Israeli dispute a matter of highest urgency. I will look over Dr. Kissinger's notes and we will send you our best thinking. Henry, do you have anything to add?

Dr. Kissinger: Only that all the headings mentioned by General Secretary will be covered. The big issue is the degree of precision to be achieved and how much should be left to the parties.

The President: A year ago when we met I had primary concern with Vietnam. I still have concern. I will say to General Secretary I agree with him and the Foreign Minister as to the urgency of this; we disagree only on tactics. We will try to find a formula that can work. We must avoid the issue -- we must find words with subtlety that will bring both sides together. We have got to find a solution. I will devote my best efforts to bring it about.

General Secretary Brezhnev: We need not define all the principles and forms on which they can be carried out. We can't write down everything. But I would like to attach to the communique some principles. These would be: withdrawal of Israeli troops, recognition of boundaries, free passage of ships, and guarantees. Without some measures of confidential agreement, we don't know where we are going.

[Editorial comment by Dr. Kissinger: Typical of Soviets to spring on us at last moment without any preparation.]

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The President: We are not prepared to go any further. We can't abstractly beat the issue to death. We don't owe anything to the Israelis. That means I am interested in a settlement. We will work on it. We can make some progress in moving this problem off dead center. We can't take intransigent position. I am prepared to move towards a settlement.

General Secretary Brezhnev: We have indeed talked about it extensively last year and even before our meeting. I have no doubt about our agreement in principle. But we must come to an understanding on this issue. We will study your messages carefully. I do not ask that we agree on all the tactics now. We will never leak any of our discussions. We can't reach agreed positions if we start taking sides. We can make a gentleman's agreement. We will be loyal to this promise. Then the channel -- Kissinger/Dobrynin -- can be used to elaborate the tactics.

I am categorically opposed to a resumption of the war. But without agreed principles that will ultimately help situation in area, we cannot do this. If there is a settlement, we can renew relations with Israel. Without such agreement our further cooperation will be weakened. We shall continue contacts but we will have problems. I know we have found common language regarding aims.

Perhaps I am tiring you out. But we must reach an understanding. We must be careful that is the case. We must act in order to achieve the desired results. The Arab states are not ours: Israel is not yours -- we helped form the State of Israel. I am for full respect for the sovereignty of all the states of the area.

I will think over our conversation. You know the role I play in my country, just as I know yours. I will always act in concert with you. You trust Dr. Kissinger; I trust Dobrynin. We will have confidential consultations. If we can now agree on a gentleman's basis on two or three principles, then Dr. Kissinger and Ambassador Dobrynin can implement them. We will keep this here in this room; the people in this room won't disclose what has been said. What goes through this channel goes only to me. All that I say should be seen as the subject of an oral understanding not communicated to anyone.

The President: As for an oral agreement, I can go no further than to look over the Gromyko discussions. I'll be in communication with him. I am trying to find a solution.

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General Secretary Brezhnev: It is not necessary for the principles to be in written form. Very well. I agree that we should work on one principle--withdrawal of forces--alone.

Recall how hard it was for us to meet last year. Some people preached to me the impossibility of a meeting. Bear in mind this difficulty. Do not let me leave without this assurance.

The President: This is of course the key question. I will look at this question in the morning. It is not as simple as all that. That could be a goal. But it wouldn't lead to a settlement. We have to face the problem in a pragmatic way.

General Secretary Brezhnev: Without the principle there is nothing I can do. Without a gentleman's agreement we can't use the channel. We need a friendly agreement. Or I will leave empty-handed. We should have an agreement without divulging the agreement to the Arabs.

The President: I will take it into account tomorrow. We won't say anything in terms of a gentleman's agreement. I hope you won't go back empty handed. But we have to break up now.

It would be very easy for me to say that Israel should withdraw from all the occupied territories and call it an agreed principle. But that's what the argument is about: I will agree to principles which will bring a settlement. That will be our project this year. The Middle East is most urgent place.

General Secretary Brezhnev: I want to mention the agricultural problem. There is the question of grain. I want to give you a draft of a letter in which we can have an exchange of letters on the subject of buying 5 million tons of grain for the years 1973-1980. I will get you the text. It will be consumed in USSR.

As you know, I will see Pompidou. My main objective is to have a conversation with him. I see three main areas for my views. He will ask me what we discussed. I will touch on MBFR. I want to ask your advice on the extent on which to inform him of our discussions. He will ask about SALT and other matters. Then I will do my consultations.