

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

SUBJECT: Meeting with Yitzhak Rabin of Israel ~~(S)~~

PARTICIPANTS: General Scowcroft, Assistant to the President
for National Security Affairs
Richard Haass, Senior Director
Bruce Riedel, NSC (Notetaker)

Yitzhaq Rabin, Labor Party Leader
Zalman Shoval, Israeli Ambassador to the U.S.

DATE, TIME AND PLACE: December 4, 1991; 5:00 - 6:00 p.m. EST
White House

Mr. Rabin: Today is a good day with the release of Terry Anderson. If I may say so the fact that Israel has had some cards to use, and I mean Shaykh Ubyad, helped. ~~(S)~~

General Scowcroft: I take your point. ~~(S)~~

Mr. Rabin: I would like to raise three issues today. First is the peace process. It is important that you let the parties confront each other directly. Let the parties break their heads against each other and do not interfere. I believe we can make progress with the Palestinians and that the Jordanians will follow along without any problem. I am skeptical we can do as well with Syria and Lebanon. There is no basis for a compromise between us and Syria. ~~(S)~~

General Scowcroft: In the past our role was to be an intermediary. Now we hope direct contact will transform the dialogue. But we recognize that the odds do not favor that and that we will have to resort to our previous methods of working with the parties. ~~(S)~~

Mr. Rabin: What is the time frame you are looking at? (U)

General Scowcroft: That is easier to say on the Palestinian's front than on the Syrian side. ~~(S)~~

Mr. Rabin: Can the two issues be dealt with separately? (U)

General Scowcroft: That is a good question. We see some signs the Palestinians want to do so. We will only know in time. ~~(S)~~

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Mr. Rabin: For several years it has been clear to me that the Palestinians want to deal with Israel. We and they agree on the framework for a compromise and on the principle of transition. Syria, on the other hand, only said yes to the U.S. not to Israel. ~~(S)~~

General Scowcroft: I agree. (U)

Dr. Haass: In an odd way, however, the issues between Israel and Syria are easier to resolve since they deal with security and not ideology. ~~(S)~~

Mr. Rabin: I agree. What about the multilaterals? I don't foresee progress until the bilaterals make progress. Why did you pick Moscow? ~~(S)~~

General Scowcroft: Because Moscow in January has an atmosphere that encourages quick decisions! (U)

Mr. Rabin: Okay! I see the real openings in the Palestinian issue. The insiders are gaining power at the expense of Tunis. ~~(S)~~

General Scowcroft: We will need to move carefully to increase their self-confidence and their courage. They are the great hope. ~~(S)~~

Mr. Rabin: You are right, they need protection from assassination. Let me raise another issue which is Iraq. What is your evaluation of the UNSCOM inspections? It seems it could take years to destroy the Iraqi programs and we are worried about the UN's resolve. ~~(S)~~

General Scowcroft: So far we are pleased. It has been more effective than I expected. The coalition against Iraq is holding together well. We have lots of support at the UN. We are hoping for some new successes very soon, by the way. ~~(S)~~

Mr. Rabin: The UN is nothing without the U.S. backing. We need to go after the Iraqi experts--that is the core of their strength and the base from which more can be rebuilt. ~~(S)~~

Mr. Riedel: We are working very closely with the UN on the long term monitoring regime. The UN seems to be giving it very serious consideration and planning. ~~(S)~~

Dr. Haass: Bruce is right--that is the way to go. ~~(S)~~

General Scowcroft: We think we are in a good position now. ~~(S)~~

Mr. Rabin: Outside the inner circle around Israel there appears to be more global disorder than new world order. China and North Korea are major proliferation problems. From Algeria to Iran a major arms race is underway which affects our security. Who can influence North Korea? We face an entirely new military threat in which long range missiles are the key problem. Peace with Syria or Jordan may not matter if we have to worry about missiles from Iran and Libya. ~~(S)~~

General Scowcroft: I would not disagree. We are looking for a multilateral arms control regime in the area but we have a long way to go. China is involved and they have influence with Korea--question is will they use it? All of this underscores the need to change the regional environment from a militant one to a more moderate one. We hope our ACME proposal can help. The problem will get worse if thousands of Soviet scientists enter the world job market. ~~(S)~~

Mr. Rabin: Okay, we appreciate your efforts. ~~(S)~~

General Scowcroft: We are very serious about the peace process. There is no magic answer but we will try very hard, very hard. As for the loan guarantees, we postponed the problem until January. We will not postpone it again. ~~(S)~~

Mr. Rabin: On what basis--peace or economic--will you decide?
(U)

General Scowcroft: Hopefully both will be our criteria. Let me ask you a question, will Shamir call new elections? ~~(S)~~

Mr. Rabin: I doubt he will do so. He is not a risk taker. I do not think Shamir will initiate new elections but he could be forced to do so. Historically--and I speak from experience--it is the religious parties that force elections and it could happen again. But I think we will wait until November 1992. The bill for more direct elections of Prime Ministers could also upset the process but I do not think so. Shamir is not a risk taker and does not want to have new elections, but of course this is a personal view. ~~(S)~~

General Scowcroft: Thank you for coming by. We miss your touch.
(U)

Mr. Rabin: Thank you for giving me your time. (U)

-- End of Meeting --