

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

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MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

SUBJECT: Meeting with Israeli Delegation (U)

PARTICIPANTS: The President
James A. Baker, III, Chief of Staff
Brent Scowcroft, Assistant to the President
Edward Djerejian, Assistant Secretary of State
Dennis Ross, Director, Policy Planning Staff
Richard Haass, Special Assistant to the President and Senior Director, Near East and South Asian Affairs, Notetaker

Elyakim Rubinstein, Head of the Delegation
Uri Lubrani
Itamar Rabinovich
Eitan Bentsur
Zalman Shoval, Israeli Ambassador to the United States

DATE, TIME AND PLACE: December 17, 1992; 11:05 - 11:20 a.m.
The Oval Office

The President: Let me begin with deportations. I've sent a message to your government with our views and opposition. But just as important is that violence is not condoned. (S)

Ambassador Shoval: I want to join what Eli (Rubenstein) said before the cameras regarding our appreciation to you for your efforts. What you did was historic and important. Yes, there were some disagreements but what you did will go down in history. The peace process will go on. It is inevitable. Recent events show that what is happening in the negotiating room is not sufficient. There are forces who want to destroy the peace process and indeed Israel. It would help if the Palestinian representatives would be more forceful in condemning violence and their rejectionists. We will go on. There is a consensus. (S)

The President: It will be important for your successor to convey this to the new Administration. I detected in Governor Clinton an enthusiasm in continuing with our catalytic role. (S)

Eli Rubinstein: I have a message from the Prime Minister. It is one of thanks for your contribution to the peace process. The slowness of the process does not detract from its historic nature. The problems in the negotiations derived from objective constraints, from the Arab tendency to tie everything to anything, and from waiting on changes here. I am sorry that there were not talks today. You must understand the nature of the fundamentalists and the opposition. The deportation decision taken by the government is not seen by us as contravening international law. In any case it is up to the courts. Remember that the deportation is temporary, only up to two years. We are determined to continue the negotiations despite this. (Ø)

As for the Jordan/Palestinian negotiations, I am glad the Madrid structure is continuing. With Jordan we are making slow, steady progress. We are trying to reach formal agreement on an agenda, which in fact is more than that. We are also meeting in various groups. With the Palestinians it is much tougher. We are working on an agenda but the main problem is a conceptual gap. They want an independent state with Jerusalem as the capital. This is their yard stick. We argue that the yard stick ought to be change from what we now have. What we are offering to them would be a great positive change. Also, it does not preclude anything when it comes to final status. Part of the problem is the way the Palestinians are bad mouthing what is offered. They are creating a public problem for themselves. (Ø)

Dennis Ross: We have told them several times that their public pessimism is counter productive. (Ø)

Chief of Staff Baker: Could you please explain what you mean when you say the deportations are up to two years. (Ø)

Ambassador Shoval: They can return in no later than 2 years unless they create new crimes. But they can appeal after 60 days. (Ø)

Uri Lubrani: On Lebanon it is most frustrating. It should be the easiest negotiations since we have no territorial aims, but we see no flexibility and no gap between Lebanon and Syria. They are totally subservient. It will require progress on the Syrian track first. They have no control over their own situation. We are trying to sustain a friendly atmosphere and show that we understand. (Ø)

Itamar Rabinovich: I have had the privilege to engage in tantalizing negotiations. We came close to a joint statement. These negotiations were transformed by the formation of a new Israeli government. There is a business like, almost friendly atmosphere. We have come a great distance from Madrid. On October 21st we introduced the element of withdrawal to be implemented as part of the peace treaty. They want early Israel commitment to full withdrawal. We will not do this. We need to hear more about peace. The Syrian concept about peace does not include full diplomatic relations; it is more of a non-

belligerency pact. This may be a negotiating tactic on their part. Two elements are missing. We need a change in the actual Syrian position on peace and we need improvement in the realm of public diplomacy and conduct. Actually, there has been some improvement in what Assad and (Foreign Minister) Shara have been saying. Assad's recent statement was his best yet. We are not asking for a visit to Jerusalem but we need clear public statements of intent. This will allow us to move. (Ø)

Eitan Bentsur: I want to join in expressing appreciation for your role as the initiator and facilitator of the peace process. Some fully believed it would ever be attainable. It is imperative that it continue. This is the only process with the promise of reconciliation. (Ø)

The President: We wish you well. We hope the deportation issue can get resolved satisfactory and does not become a road block. The meetings here today were dominated by this issue. It is important to keep the process going. It is the key for the Middle East and Israel. (Ø)

Eli Rubenstein: We look forward to continuing. It is important that people realize that hope lies with the negotiations and not with Hamas. But I feel that progress is being made. (Ø)

-- End of Conversation --