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SPECIAL DOCUMENT

HENRY KISSINGER'S PRESCRIPTION FOR SUPPRESSING THE FIRST INTIFADA, 31 JANUARY 1988

In June 1988, under the title "Kissinger Behind Closed Doors," Harper's Magazine published an extraordinary confidential memorandum describing a breakfast meeting held by American Jewish leaders with Henry Kissinger on 31 January 1988 to discuss the Palestinian uprising that had broken out almost two months earlier. The memorandum, written by Julius Berman, the former chair of the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations, and sent to a group of friends, was leaked to the press in March 1988. According to Harper's, "Kissinger reacted angrily to the leaking of the memo, but did not dispute its accuracy."

JPS finds it appropriate to republish the memorandum, leaving it to the reader to ponder its relevance to Israel's conduct during Operation Defensive Shield and to the current talk of convening a peace conference.

Dear Friend:

I attended a private "off the record" breakfast meeting with Henry Kissinger early this week to discuss the current situation in the Mideast and I believe you will find of interest the following report on the discussion that took place.

Dr. Kissinger conveyed three major points, as follows:

1. Now is *not* the time for Jewish community leaders to publicly attack Israel or its policies with respect to the Palestinians;
2. Israel should bar the media from entry into the territories involved in the present demonstrations, accept the short-term criticism of the world press for such conduct, and put down the insurrection as quickly as possible—overwhelmingly, brutally, and rapidly;
3. The proposed international peace conference, as presently conceived by Foreign Minister [Shimon] Peres, may lead to a "disaster" for Israel.

I will now elucidate Dr. Kissinger's development of these points.

He started out by making it clear that he wants to be perceived by the public as an American leader and not as a representative of the Jewish community, but that we should realize that he would never participate in any-

thing that would negatively affect the security of Israel, especially in light of what had happened to his own family during the Holocaust.

. . . The real tragedy facing Israel is obvious: it cannot give up all of the territories and end up like Czechoslovakia at the beginning of World War II; yet it cannot maintain dominion over all of the Arabs in the territories.

Focusing on the situation in the last few weeks in Israel, Kissinger appropriately noted that Israel's public relations were horrible. In his opinion Israel made two major mistakes. First, it did not throw all of the media out of the relevant territories. Second, it announced that it would "beat" the participants (and not shoot them). Israel may have felt that approach was more humane, but it overlooked the fact that when you "beat" someone it means you already have control of that person and can no longer claim self-defense.

Kissinger repeatedly emphasized that under no circumstances should Israel make any concessions during the present insurrection. If one learns anything from the history of revolutions, it is that concessions during an insurrection merely accelerate the revolution rather than hasten its end. Therefore, what is critical at this time is to put down the insurrection as quickly as possible. It was at that point that Kissinger added that he "really thinks that Jewish leaders should not yell at Israel now and make [Israelis] even more paranoid." We must close ranks and not let the enemy utilize quotations from Jewish leaders as evidence to support [his] position.

Kissinger then turned to the international peace conference which has been proposed by Foreign Minister Peres. He said that he was fully apprised of all the procedural conditions that Peres has placed on the conference and the respective roles of the parties involved, but he still feels that Peres overlooked one major problem. What is going to happen during the second week of the conference? All the deals that Peres has made with the various prospective participants in the conference reflect, in his opinion, naïveté and are a bit childish. After all is said and done, Israel does not have a government at present that could formulate a substantive policy for the proposed conference and, on the other side of the coin, there is no Arab leader that is able to make peace right now. Israel must always be aware of the fact that the American government is not against Israel's return to the 1967 borders (except for, possibly, Jerusalem). . . .

Kissinger recently had a conversation with Assistant Secretary of State Richard Murphy, in which [Murphy] explained to him in excruciating detail all the procedural protections for the beginning of the conference. He notes, however, that no one was focusing on what happens in the course of the conference itself. He feels that if the United States and Israel do not have a prearranged agreement as to what positions will be taken at the conference, it may lead to a disaster. For example, assuming that after the opening there will be subcommittees for bilateral negotiations, there is no question that they will come to an immediate deadlock. After all, can King Hussein really agree to give up any territory to Israel? What happens then? According to the

Peres formula, Israel will have the right to say that nobody could talk from that point on. That simply cannot be done. For that matter, the idea of Israel just walking out the conference is ridiculous.

Kissinger noted that, other than Israel, there is no state attending the conference that does not favor Israel's return to the 1967 borders and, in his opinion, Israel could not survive that type of withdrawal.

In general, Kissinger feels that the issue of a peace treaty is overblown. It is not the be-all and end-all of peace in the Mideast. Mutual recognition did not stop Iran and Iraq from their war, nor has it stopped India and Pakistan from continuing to fight with each other.

Focusing on the conference itself, Kissinger said that there is no question in his mind that China will adamantly support an extreme Arab position. This is necessary to outdo the Russians' romancing of the Arabs. Syria, in his opinion, must also take a radical position on the Palestinian claim, so that it will not end up being isolated on the Golan Heights issue. Israel, on the other hand, can never give up the Golan. . . .

Returning to the current situation in Israel, he repeated his prior point that the insurrection must be quelled immediately, and the first step should be to throw out television, à la South Africa. To be sure, there will be international criticism of this step, but that will dissipate in short order. As he put it, "There are no rewards for losing with moderation."

He feels that international guarantees [of new borders after a settlement] are not worth a damn. They can only be used to stop Israel from appropriately defending itself from terrorist activities; they are no help against guerilla infiltration.

In terms of an ultimate solution, Kissinger feels that Israel should negotiate with America and work out a unified position, if at all possible, and then unilaterally announce that it is prepared to transfer control of Gaza to Jordan—not Egypt; he does not want Egyptian troops on Israel's borders. Moreover, he feels that Egypt would allow the PLO to take over Gaza, and he is confident that King Hussein of Jordan would never allow the PLO to take similar control.

As noted above, he does not believe that Israel should retain *all* the territory that it took in the 1967 war. Consequently, at the same time Israel is making its unilateral announcement on Gaza, Israel should announce the specific territories within Judaea or Samaria that it is willing to relinquish, provided that no military forces be situated there and that there be no PLO-controlled government in that area.

The announcement would then conclude with an offer to have an international conference convened for the purpose of implementing the proposal.

In the give-and-take of the subsequent discussion at the meeting, it became clear that Kissinger is not confident such a unilateral declaration would get very far, and of course, one of the fears that immediately comes to mind is that such a declaration would be interpreted as the *initial* position of Israel and subject to negotiation at the conference itself.