

# U.S. Support For Mideast Development Feeds Peace Process

Although not publicly involved in the recent historic meetings between Egyptian President Anwar Sadat and Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin, leading circles in the United States have played an essential contributory role in making those talks possible. On various fronts, groups of top U.S. legislators and businessmen have undertaken quiet efforts to lay the basis for a permanent Mideast peace through regional development in the crisis-ridden area.

At the time of the Sadat-Begin meeting in Jerusalem, a U.S. congressional delegation, led by House Majority Leader Jim Wright (D-Tex.) and House Majority Whip Restenkowski (D-Ill.) was on hand in the Middle East to give ringside support to the two leaders. The delegation was present when President Sadat accepted the Israeli invitation, and two days later Prime Minister Begin announced the historic meeting to the international press

in the company of the Wright delegation. The Congressmen are known to have carried messages between Sadat and Begin.

Early last week, sources in Italy leaked that a self-styled U.S.-Italian Chamber of Commerce had been involved in preparing the Sadat-Begin meeting. Reportedly, circles in the United States closely associated with Southwestern energy and industrial interests were cooperating with a similar group of Italian businessmen to build the framework for a development-based Mideast peace, including preparation of congressional legislation calling for nuclear exports, etc.

Finally, the business- and industry-oriented *Journal of Commerce* exposed its knowledge of these goings-on Nov. 28 by running a front-page interview with Israel's economic development specialist Dr. Kanovsky on the prospects of booming regional trade once a global settlement is achieved.

## U.S. Delegation Paved The Way For Sadat-Begin Meeting

*The following is an interview with Congressman Fred Rooney (D-Pa) who accompanied Congressman Jim Wright's Congressional delegation visit to Egypt and Israel last week.*

**Q:** What do you think of the way the Administration is handling Middle East policy in light of your trip to the area?

**A:** Well, the U.S. role should be just what the Administration is doing. We have a role to play. I hope that the USSR will agree to attend the Cairo meeting. I understand that in the last hour the President said he would send two top diplomats there.

**Q:** Are you hopeful about the situation?

**A:** Well, I've spoken to people in Cairo and Luxor, and they and Sadat want peace. The Israeli government is willing to make concessions to get peace.

**Q:** What role did your delegation play in the negotiations around Sadat's visit to Israel?

**A:** Our delegation was a conduit to the peace initiatives. We met with Sadat for an hour and a half and he was impressed with our sincerity. We were the ones he told of his acceptance of the proposal to go to Israel. Then we met in Jerusalem with Begin for an hour and a half. I think just our being there helped things. We conveyed messages back and forth to bridge the gap between the two and to try to get them together. We were the first to know that Sadat had agreed to the Israeli proposal. Begin called up Wright when we were in Israel and asked us to stay for the Knesset speech. Our purpose there was to find out what the situation was. We are issuing a statement today lauding Sadat and Begin. Begin will yield some land although he will not go back to the 1967

borders. The PLO won't be in Cairo now; Syria won't be, but they will come around. I believe what they are saying now is for public consumption.

## Mideast Peace To Boost Trade

*The following excerpts are from the Nov. 30 Journal of Commerce front-page article entitled "Peace in Mideast Seen Boosting Trade" by Macabee Dean.*

Dr. Kanovsky places Israel on the lower rungs of the developed countries, and therefore Israel might eventually come to be a major trading partner, especially with Egypt. Indeed, some clandestine trade (through neutral countries and through the administered areas of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip) has been going on for years.

At present, however, the Israeli government has no concrete plans for trading with the Arab countries, extending technical help, developing joint projects or cooperation in any field. But a committee was recently set up by the Finance Ministry to study all aspects of such an eventuality. "Peace should lead to a reduction in military expenditures; I estimate that this will account for 75 percent of all benefits accruing to the area..."

All Mideast countries spend about one-quarter to one-third of their annual budgets on defense. By reducing this sum considerably, huge quantities of money could be diverted to development projects.

Probably the most immediate effect of peace will be a huge upsurge in tourism.

The second step, while not so immediate, would be a gradual move towards normalization of the Mideast transport system.