

Camp David Preparations Underway: Will Carter Toughen Up?

Preparations are currently underway for the United States strategy for the Sept. 5 Carter-Begin-Sadat summit at Camp David. The question in the minds of all informed observers is whether Jimmy Carter will prevail on Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin to agree to make peace with the Arab states by accepting the principle of Israeli withdrawal from the occupied West Bank. If Begin does not agree to this, what, if anything, does Carter have readied as the type of follow-up that would identify Israeli intransigence as the block to successful regional peace talks?

Strategy sessions to resolve exactly this question have begun this week at the estate of special envoy Averell Harriman between Secretary of State Cyrus Vance, special Middle East negotiator Alfred Atherton, Undersecretary of State Harold Saunders, and National Security Council Middle East advisor William Quandt. As these talks began official State Department sources described as "taboo" any public discussion on the "pressure Israel" subject. In testimony before the Israel Lobby-dominated Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Vance steered a cautious path, insisting that he was opposed to pressuring Israel yet at the same time strongly defending Saudi Arabia's positive role in the regional negotiations and criticizing Israel's decisions over the past months to erect new illegal settlements in the occupied West Bank territory.

Potential American indecision to act in the face of Israel is being attributed in the international press to Carter's fears of taking on the domestic Zionist Lobby; at the same time, Arab, European, and East bloc sources are concerned about the calamitous consequences if Carter does not show the toughness to take Israeli intransigence on forthrightly.

Israel's Threats

In lieu of any U.S. pressure on Israel, the Israeli government has publicly indicated its willingness to dangerously heat up the Middle East situation if matters don't go their way. Aside from renewed threats from Israeli military layers to bomb Arabian oilfields and continued Israeli obstructions in Lebanon, the Begin government is openly threatening to expand Israeli illegal control over the West Bank.

On Aug. 13, government spokesmen admitted that

Israel had initiated schemes in June of this year to build five new settlements in the West Bank. Leading the settlement drive, Agriculture Minister Ariel Sharon declared that "we must put our foot in the door everywhere, everywhere," before having peace talks with the Arabs. Co-thinkers of Sharon's in the ruling Likud Party spoke to the press about the necessity of Israel "creating facts" in the West Bank before the Camp David talks began.

A hue and cry broke out worldwide, including in Israel, when the provocative June decision was made public. Hurriedly, a special Cabinet committee voted to "defer" all settlement projects pending the outcome of Camp David — an unambiguous signal of Israeli policy to follow the summit if some momentum toward peace is not achieved at that meeting.

Push For Separate Peace

Informed Israeli sources close to Foreign Minister Moshe Dayan have evaluated Israel's negotiating position at Camp David as addressing the following blunt question to the Egyptians: "Are you ready to go to war over the West Bank?"

Stated otherwise, this question translates as, "Is Egypt going to sign a separate peace with Israel of the type advocated by Henry Kissinger?"

The architect on the Israeli side of the Kissinger-arranged 1975 Egypt-Israel Sinai Pact, former Premier Yitzhak Rabin, this weekend publicly advocated a separate peace, as the alternative to failure in reaching a mutually-agreed-upon declaration of principles on the question of self-determination for the Palestinian Arabs. Correspondents and editorialists in the Israeli Press have echoed this line.

According to an informed Gulf States-connected Arab source, "A separate peace would be the green light for Israel to strike East, against Arabian oilfields." The source labeled this potentiality "Saudi Arabia's greatest single fear," and indicated that the Saudis were intensively deployed throughout the Arab world to prevent a separate peace from coming into being. The source portrayed the separate peace push as only one element in a concerted Israeli-U.S. Zionist Lobby drive to "rupture U.S.-Saudi relations" and to "set up Saudi Arabia for a long-range hit."

"Separate peace" rumors have intersected reports

that a subject to be discussed at Camp David will be the stationing of U.S. troops in the Middle East to "guarantee" an Egypt-Israel peace. This possibility has been bitterly attacked by the Soviets, who have identified National Security Council chief Zbigniew Brzezinski as its architect.

Despite the publicity given to the separate peace dynamic, Egyptian President Anwar Sadat stressed Aug. 14 that he "would not sign a separate peace," but was committed to a "global accord. . . . I could have signed a separate peace a long time ago but I didn't, so why do these reports persist?" Sadat stressed.

Lebanon: Precedent For American Pressure?

The one sign that emerged this week that the U.S. would take Israel to task for obstructing Middle East talks was the evidence of U.S. pressure to force Israel

to stop arming the Lebanese Falangists. According to *Newsweek* magazine, shipments have in fact stopped to the Falange because of U.S. pressure.

Whether this is just a "put-out-the-fire-that-Israel-sets" operation, or is part of a wider operation to bring Israel into line, is as yet unclear.

In Lebanon, meanwhile, the Israelis continue to play with fire despite U.S. involvement. Israeli puppets in the South refuse to allow Lebanese Army forces to penetrate southward, jeopardizing United Nations peacekeeping efforts in the region. In Beirut, Israeli agents blew up a nine-story building in western Beirut in an attempt to initiate a new wave of terrorism in the Middle East. But the fact of Israeli intelligence's involvement has begun to emerge into the international press (see below).

— Mark Burdman

Views Of The Summit From Around The World

The Sept. 5 Camp David summit has drawn a great deal of commentary and evaluation from the international press and diplomatic community. The following is a representative sample, from the U.S., Europe, the Soviet bloc, and the Arab world.

A U.S. insider in the negotiations stressed that:

Camp David is a delicate balance, as we search for an umbrella to further the talks. The crux is for Israel to give back the West Bank: we need a commitment from Israel *in principle* that the West Bank and Sinai are Arab territory. That's the key: in return for it, the Arabs can make some concessions in terms of the Israeli security question. This won't be detailed to the point at Camp David, but will be discussed in follow-up working groups. . . .

For the West Bank, we need the principle of eventual self-determination. This may not seem like stated U.S. policy, but that is what is meant by 'legitimate rights of the Palestinians,' and the Israelis are fully aware of it. . . .

As for the Soviets, they'll buy the package if it doesn't include American troops being sent to the area, and that idea is not coming from the Administration, but from some people in Congress.

Other sources took a less sanguine tone. The Saudis have made clear that their support for the Camp David initiative is *conditional* on Israel making territorial and related concessions. On Aug. 9, the Saudi paper *Al-Bilad* stated that Camp David:

will be more or less Israel's last chance to make responsive steps to any reasonable initiative or to hinder it, which would make it yet another failure like the other meetings that have taken place. . . . (We) hope that Israel will not use the Camp David meeting to propagate again disunity in the Arab ranks when healthy signs of solidarity and the start of unified strategy have appeared on the horizon.

On Aug. 11, the *Riyadh Domestic Service* stressed that the Camp David meeting:

represents the last chance for Israel to abandon its arrogance and its insistence on its rigid position and to show greater flexibility. . . . Nobody expects the summit meeting to succeed unless the United States puts forward a plan of its own in line with the UN resolutions and forces Israel to accept. . . . The failure of this conference is fraught with great danger. . . . It will... mean the squandering of the last chance open to Israel to return to the right path and realize that it cannot gain peace and territory at one and the same time.

Jordan's *Amman Domestic Service* Aug. 9 worried about the consequences for Camp David if Carter held back from pressuring Israel:

As the United States clings to its stands of not exerting pressure on Israel, not submitting definite proposals and not turning into a full partner in the negotiations, except in the sense of arranging another meeting here or there; and as Israel is more persistent than ever on sticking to the two matters of territories and sovereignty, with constant denial of the firm, legitimate rights of the Palestinian Arab people, it is difficult to make progress toward a comprehensive peace in the region. . . . In order for us to have hope in the possibility of making progress toward a true and comprehensive peace, the United States should have called for a summit conference that comprises all the parties concerned with the Middle East dispute, including the Soviet Union and the EEC, in addition to the principal Arab parties.

The Dangers of War

A writer close to Egyptian President Sadat, Anis Mansour of the weekly *October* magazine, warned on Cairo's *Middle East News Agency* Aug. 13 that: