

NOTE OF A DISCUSSION DURING THE PRIME MINISTER'S LUNCH FOR THE PRIME MINISTER OF ISRAEL, MR. MENACHEM BEGIN, AT 10 DOWNING STREET, on 23 MAY 1979 AT 1315.

Present:

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| The Prime Minister | Mr. Menachem Begin |
| The Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary | HE The Israeli Ambassador |
| Mr. Douglas Hurd
(Minister of State, FCO) | Dr. Rubin Hecht |
| Sir Anthony Parsons (FCO) | Mr. Yehuda Avner |
| Mr. Ron Mason
(HM Ambassador, Tel Aviv) | |
| Mr. B.G. Cartledge | |

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Towards the end of the Prime Minister's lunch for the Israeli Prime Minister, Mr. Begin initiated a discussion of the situation in the Middle East by citing the unexpected postponement of the inauguration of the air corridor between Cairo and Tel Aviv as an example of the unpredictability of the Egyptian Government. He mentioned, in the same context, the violent attack which had been launched on him by the Egyptian press only two days after the signing ceremony of the peace treaty between Egypt and Israel at which President Sadat had been the soul of affability.

Lord Carrington asked Mr. Begin whether he was not apprehensive about the consequences of the reaction of other Arab states to the peace treaty. Mr. Begin said that he was not: he would like to help President Sadat but there was few means open to him for doing so - and time was on the side of the treaty. Of all the Arab states, Syria's attitudes, which were dictated by Soviet influence, were the most negative. In the Lebanon, Syria had 15,000 troops armed with Soviet weapons who had attacked the Christians in the South. Israel had helped the Christians who were now in no danger of annihilation. Lord Carrington interjected that there was nevertheless a danger to UNIFIL. Those contingents in UNIFIL who were being shot at found the experience unpleasant and their

Governments were quite likely to pull them out, putting the blame on the Christians. As the Christians obtained their weapons from Israel, could not Israel restrain them?

Mr. Begin did not agree with Lord Carrington's assessment and claimed that of the 19 UNIFIL soldiers who had been shot, only one had been a victim of shooting by the Christians whereas 18 had been killed by the PLO. Israel would use such influence as she could but the Christians were not directly under Israeli influence.

The Prime Minister said that political failure was inevitably followed by economic failure; hatred could destroy anything, as it was doing in the Lebanon. Mr. Begin explained that divisions between the Moslem sects greatly complicated the situation in the Lebanon and mentioned President Sadat's public insult to the small sect to which President Asad of Syria belonged. The Prime Minister said that two such able men should be giving leadership in the Middle East, rather than exchanging insults. The Syrian Foreign Minister, Mr. Khaddam had opened her eyes to the depth of Arab hostility to President Sadat. President Sadat was nevertheless the key to the survival of the peace treaty and he should be helped. The extent to which he could be helped would depend on the progress of the negotiations about the West Bank.

Mr. Begin said that Egypt and Israel had acted to put an end to war between them: this was not a crime. They had not concluded a separate peace treaty; they both wanted a comprehensive settlement and there was no reason why they should abandon their efforts simply because some states did not like them. The Prime Minister said that it would therefore be important to help President Sadat by stressing whenever possible that the peace treaty constituted only a first step. Mr. Begin emphasised the malign influence of the Soviet Union in the Middle East, quoting Soviet successes in Mozambique, Angola, Afghanistan and Ethiopia as evidence of a continuing extension of Soviet power.

/ Lord Carrington

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Lord Carrington told Mr. Begin that the continuing process of Israeli settlement on the West Bank was a matter of concern to the UK and could, in the UK's view, constitute a real difficulty in the way of the impending negotiations. Mr. Begin replied that the settlements were entirely legal in terms of international law and also from the point of view of Israel's national security. He gave the Prime Minister a translation of the judgement on this matter by the Supreme Court of Israel, handed down at the end of 1978, and read an extensive quotation from it.

The Prime Minister said that the UK was deeply concerned that a comprehensive settlement should be achieved, both in Israel's interests and in those of the West as a whole. Israel and the UK were both small countries of whom, for a variety of reasons, higher standards were expected than of others. She urged Mr. Begin to look at the long-term objective: the safeguarding of a way of life which Soviet policies were placing in jeopardy. The UK was concerned for the stability of the whole Middle Eastern region. The depth of this concern was well-known to her in her own constituency, from which large numbers of Jews would go to fight for Israel if necessary. Mr. Begin said that his Government would obey the ruling of the Supreme Court. This was not, however, only a matter of law but one of geography and security. If the PLO were allowed to take over the hills on the West Bank, the whole urban population of Israel would fall within the range of their machine guns, let alone of their artillery and rockets. News had arrived only that morning of the brutal murder of an Israeli mother and her baby. If the PLO were given freedom to shoot at Israelis, the bloodshed would be permanent.

Mr. Begin went on to explain his Government's concept of autonomy for the West Bank. He said that the Palestinian Arabs would have full autonomy in the election of their own representatives and in the administration of departments running their internal affairs: only matters of security would be reserved for Israel, otherwise bloodshed would be inevitable. Israel would, never, however, agree to the creation of a Palestinian state - Mr. Begin asked that the Lord Privy Seal should be made aware of this: such a state would simply become a Soviet base, since the PLO

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were Soviet agents. A situation would be created in which there were Soviet Generals on the West Bank - a Soviet base in the heart of the Middle East. It was for this reason that President Carter himself was opposed to a Palestinian state, as was King Hussein. The Arabs, said Mr. Begin, had self-determination in 22 sovereign Arab states: why should the small Jewish state be jeopardised by the creation of a 23rd Arab state? Israel would be faithful to all the undertakings she had signed at Camp David. Israel would not refuse to carry forward negotiations on the West Bank simply because Jordan and the Palestinians refused to join in. But, as Lloyd George had recognised, the land of Palestine belonged to the Jews.

Lord Carrington said that, leaving aside the legalities, continuing settlement of the West Bank surely made it less likely that any agreement could be reached. Mr. Begin disagreed. He knew that the Lord Privy Seal had declared in Parliament that the Israeli settlements were illegal: but he obeyed the judges of the Israeli Supreme Court, not the Lord Privy Seal.

Mr. Begin then recalled the sufferings of the Jewish people both during and immediately after the Second World War, from which nobody had acted to save them. It was against this background that Israel's views on security should be judged. Lord Carrington commented that one man's security could be another man's threat.

The Prime Minister commented that she did not know of any case in which political autonomy had been separate from territorial autonomy. Since all the inhabitants of the West Bank would have the same right to elect representatives to the Knesset, would not the Arabs soon achieve a majority? Mr. Begin said that the Arabs would be given a choice of citizenship; if they chose Israeli citizenship they would vote to the Knesset, if Jordanian citizenship, to the Jordanian Parliament. The answer to the Prime Minister's question, however, lay in the continuing flow of immigrants into Israel. Jews were not only continuing to come to Israel from the Soviet Union, but also from Canada, the United States and even Latin America.

/ Lord Carrington

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Lord Carrington told Mr. Begin that the UK had some experience of granting independence and knew that the kind of autonomy envisaged by Israel for the West Bank could not stick; self-government alone would not satisfy the inhabitants. Mr. Begin said that the Israelis referred to self-rule rather than self-government

The Prime Minister emphasised once more that the UK's concern, and that of the West, that a comprehensive settlement should be achieved in the Middle East stemmed from a determination to oppose the tyranny of the Soviet Union, which thrived on disunity and dissension. Mr. Begin referred to the failure of the West to bomb the railways leading to Auschwitz at the end of the war and of Israel's determination that those in the Middle East who would like to see Israel and all her people destroyed should not succeed. Israel had a valiant army which would fight if necessary. The Israeli Government would never tolerate a situation in which the men of Israel could not defend their wives and children. Lord Carrington said that everybody would understand Israeli feelings about the Jewish past; but there were different ways of reaching an objective and it was possible to say, without any hostility, that a certain course would not achieve it. He hoped that the views of friends could sometimes be taken into account.

It was agreed at the end of the discussion that the press could be told that the Prime Minister and Mr. Begin had had a wide-ranging discussion of the problems of the Middle East, in a most friendly atmosphere.

Ben.

23 May 1979