

Ma'ariv, May 13, 1977.

Excerpts from an Article by Menahem Begin

Mr. Bar Lev is threatening that life here at home is becoming hell, and Mr. Peres assures us of a similar hell (waiting for us) in America, if it should fall to the Likud to form the next government, or, to use his negative terms, if the Alignment should not be at the helm. There will be a crisis, the Alignment's candidate for Prime Minister frightens us, in relations between Israel and the United States. Neither the Arabs nor the Americans will put up with the Likud platform, which states: "The right of the Jewish People to the Land of Israel is eternal, and irrevocable, and it entails the right to security. For this reason (the two intertwined reasons) Judea and Samaria will not be handed over to any foreign ruler. Israel sovereignty alone will prevail between the sea and the Jordan River." The meaning of the full sentence in this respect is that just as we shall not demand that the Arabs accept our proposals in advance in order (for us) to sit down at the negotiating table, they must not ask us to accept their demands ahead of time in order for them to participate at a peace conference. In short: we have suggestions; we do not have conditions. We have proposals on the contents of a peace treaty; we have no prior conditions for opening and conducting negotiations.

As for the U.S., a sort of paradox has come about, most people feel. Up to June 1--the date on which the official results are published, the date on which the President of the State is permitted by law to begin with the moves of forming a government--we have a government consisting of Mr. Rabin (the Prime Minister, now on vacation); Mr. Peres (chairman of the Cabinet sessions); Mr. Allon, Minister of Foreign Affairs (who expects to be transferred to the Ministry of Defense); and Mr. Kol, Minister of Tourism. They have all stated that they are in favor of handing over Judea and Samaria. They even boast of this willingness, slapping their own backs in fervent congratulations.

In the usual language then, we have at this time a government calling itself moderate, whose policy has to be not tough, but compromising; not obdurate, but reasonable. Not the "not one inch from Judea and Samaria" declaration made by Mr. Moshe Dayan, but thousands of inches to be handed over--as Messrs. Rabin, Peres, Allon and Kol so enthusiastically announce.

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According to Mr. Peres' frightening prophecy, such a government actually ought to be complimented and lauded by the U.S. Administration; but lo and behold! This "moderate" government receives nothing but painful blows--and these in arenas more difficult than Washington. We are forbidden to sell the Kfir planes to Ecuador; we have lost millions of dollars and an important market. A commitment made by the former President, viz. to let us have concussion bombs--primarily a deterrent weapon--has been violated. We have not been included on the favored-nation list for receiving sophisticated weapons. For the first time in six years an American President has taken the Rogers Plan out of the deep freeze--withdrawal to the lines of June 4, 1967 "with minor adjustments" and with the addition (which was never in the Rogers Plan) of a "homeland for the Palestinians."

Where is American-Israeli understanding now? It exists only in the imagination of Professor Shlomo Avineri, the Director-General of the Foreign Ministry, who was in a hurry to recommend to a minority government that it draw a map--thereby practically asking for direct pressure to be exerted on it. Messrs. Peres and Allon rejected this poor advice; but they have an idea which can only be described as childish, at best--namely: they contend that if they propose a territorial compromise, i.e., handing over parts of Eretz Yisrael to the enemy, the Arabs will fall into a political trap. They will reject the "compromise" and claim that Israel must withdraw to the lines of June 4, 1967. Then the Americans, British, French and other nations will say that the Israelis manifested willingness, flexibility and other praiseworthy qualities while their enemies remain tough, uncompromising and adamant--and the entire blame for lack of peace will be placed on the Arabs' shoulders. We have heard this argument lately, in election propoganda, stated by no other than Mr. Shimon Peres and Mr. Allon in person.

It meanwhile transpires that this is mere political infantilism. Syria's ruler Asad went to Geneva to meet with President Carter and told him, before the beginning of their important meeting, that Syria would not concede even a foot of land. Mr. Carter was neither angered nor did he denounce this hardline and extremist attitude; instead, he lauded his guest from Damascus, using just about all the complimentary terms there are. We have heard no French or British spokesman denouncing Asad's uncompromising stand. On the contrary, all are agreed with Mr. Carter, namely that Asad is the key man in the Middle East for bringing peace to the region. This is rather interesting. Not a foot (of land), says the Syrian, and the praises rain down upon his head; praises of those wanting peace, cherishing peace, and seeking peace.

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The same holds good for Sadat. This dictator left for Washington, had the daring to declare there too that Israel must withdraw to the lines of June 4, 1967--including the abandoning of Eastern Jerusalem--and permit the establishing of a Palestinian state in Samaria, Judea and Gaza; these areas to be linked up by a corridor through the Negev. "In return" he is prepared to offer us a state of non-belligerency. It is virtually impossible to conceive of a more extremist stand than this; more foolish and more dangerous to the Jewish State--its security, well-being and future. Nevertheless, nobody rebuked him in America. President Carter extolled Sadat as one of the great leaders upon whom the peace in the Middle East depends and promised to give serious consideration to his requests for sophisticated weapons. No condemnation of Sadat's obdurate stand, his inflexibility or his preventing a peace settlement. Again--on the contrary; for his lack of compromise Sadat, too, is extravagantly lauded and complimented. Where then is this political trap into which the Arab rulers fell, or were pushed, by the policy of compromise so favored by the present government?

The truth is a different story altogether. The Arabs are awarded recognition and praise. But the Israelis are told: if you are prepared to withdraw you must know that the withdrawal suggested by you is not enough for achieving a peace settlement with the Arabs. Don't be so tough, you Israelis. Withdraw a little more. We will provide you with guarantees, demilitarized zones, international troops. But you will have to move back to the lines of June 4, 1967, with some minor adjustments. In other words, the Israeli proposals for a "compromise" do not set any trap for the Arabs but for the Israelis themselves; all they do is invite additional pressure with further withdrawal, which even Messrs. Peres and Allon would not wish. Thus it turns out that this entire show of compromise is a pretence leading the people astray.

We must therefore pay them back in their own coin, ignore their attempts to intimidate us. We have to prove to them that we are citizens of Israel, free citizens, who will not bow their heads before imaginary alarms. We shall overcome foolish anxieties. We shall maintain our human and national dignity. We shall place our trust in the Likud and raise it to the summit, for the good of us all, with God's help.

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