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BEGIN: DESPITE DIFFERENCES WITH SADAT OVER PALESTINIAN ISSUE, ISMAILIA TALKS WERE SUCCESSFUL

By Yitzhak Shargil

TEL AVIV, Dec. 26 (JTA)—Premier Menachem Begin returned from Ismailia this morning declaring that his talks there with President Anwar Sadat of Egypt were successful despite "fundamental" differences between Israel and Egypt on the issue of the Palestinian Arabs.

He told reporters at Ben Gurion Airport that a joint statement of agreement in principle was not possible at this time because the Egyptians insist on a Palestinian state on the West Bank and Gaza Strip and would not accept Israel's proposal for self-rule for the Arab populations of those territories. (See story from Ismailia.)

However, Begin said, the positions of both sides remain the basis for continuing negotiations. He said the decision reached at Ismailia to establish joint political and military committees under the rotating chairmanships of the Israeli and Egyptian foreign and defense ministers respectively gave new momentum to the peace-making process.

Begin said the committees would begin their work in the middle of next month—Jan. 14 or 15—and estimated that it would take 2-3 months to complete their task. "We hope they will bring us agreements which, in turn, will lead to peace," the Premier said.

He said the chairmanships would alternate on a weekly basis. The political committee will meet in Jerusalem presided over by Foreign Minister Moshe Dayan while the military committee convenes in Cairo under the chairmanship of Egyptian War Minister Gen. Mohammed Gamassy. In the second week, Israeli Defense Minister Ezer Weizman will assume the chairmanship in Cairo and Egyptian Foreign Minister Mohammed Ibrahim Kaamel will take over the political committee in Jerusalem.

Explains Absence Of Joint Statement

Begin spoke frankly of his differences with Sadat and indicated that they had decided amicably to stand on their respective positions pending further negotiations. "There was a suggestion that we come up with a common statement. We discussed this for long and many hours. There were points we agreed upon but there was disagreement over the issue of the Palestinian Arabs. There was an Egyptian formula that we could not accept and we brought up our proposals which the Egyptians could not accept," Begin said. "We discussed this more hours last night, thinking that maybe in the morning we might find an acceptable phrasing."

"However, it turned out that the differences on this issue were fundamental. The Egyptians insisted on the establishment of a Palestinian state in Gaza and the West Bank which we rejected totally. And the Egyptians could not accept our proposal that the Palestinian Arabs get self-rule or what is termed autonomous administration. When we found there was no possibility of coming out with a common statement we followed the usual formula that when such a statement is impossible each side expresses its own attitude. We suggested that to Sadat and he accepted it."

"Thus, the statement that Sadat read at Ismailia: 'The Israeli and Egyptian delegations have discussed the Palestinian problem. The Egyptian attitude is that a Palestinian state should be formed in the West Bank and Gaza. The Israeli attitude is that the Palestinian Arabs get self-rule. The issue will be discussed in the political committee.'"

Begin stressed, however, that "the momentum continues." He said that "in three weeks or so the negotiations will be resumed at the ministerial level. The Egyptians have received the Israeli plan as a basis for negotiations. They will prepare a counterplan that will be discussed in the committees."

The Premier reported on his talks with Sadat to President Carter by telephone tonight and also to Prime Minister James Callaghan of Britain. Begin, who will present his plan to the Knesset, said that party discipline would be lifted and each member will be free to vote his conscience.

BEGIN, SADAT PLEDGE TO CONTINUE PEACE MOMENTUM, BUT SUMMIT FAILS TO CLOSE EGYPTIAN-ISRAELI GAP

By David Landau

ISMAILIA, Dec. 26 (JTA)—The gap between Israel and Egypt on the Palestinian question has apparently not been narrowed as a result of the Ismailia summit, and while both President Anwar Sadat and Premier Menachem Begin pledged here today to continue with the peace momentum, there was a feeling of some let down among observers at the failure to make progress on this fundamental issue.

The failure was particularly accentuated when it became clear at the start of the two leaders' joint press conference this morning that they had not been able to formulate a joint statement of intent or declaration of principles as had earlier been hoped and expected.

Instead, Sadat read a prepared statement, to which Begin added his verbal concurrence, reporting "progress" on the "question of the withdrawal" (apparently meaning Sinai withdrawal), adding: "But on the Palestinian question, which we consider the core and crux of the conflict, the Egyptian and Israeli delegations discussed the Palestinian problem. . . . The position of Egypt is that on the West Bank and the Gaza Strip a Palestinian state should be established."

"The position of Israel is that Palestinian Arabs"—here Sadat paused for some 10 seconds—"of Judea (sic) Samaria and the Gaza Strip should enjoy self-rule. We have agreed that—because we have differed on this issue—the issue will be discussed in the political committee of the Cairo preparatory conference."

Role Of The Two Committees

The "political committee," to be headed by the two foreign ministers, is one of two committees which Sadat and Begin agreed to set up yesterday to continue their peace efforts. It will convene early in January in Jerusalem, the two leaders explained today and the United States and United Nations will be invited to participate—as they have participated until now in the Cairo conference itself.

Sadat said the "political" and "military" committees would "work in the context of the Cairo conference" and report back on their decisions to the

plenary of that conference.

The military committee, under the two defense ministers, will meet, apparently simultaneously, in Cairo—but here, Sadat explained, only the two sides will participate, not third parties. This seemed to mean that the military committee will confine itself exclusively to the security and territorial issues pertinent to the Sinai.

Says All Gaps Can Be Bridged

Both leaders took pains to put the best imprint possible on the results of their summit and on the future prospects of the negotiations. "I do not think there is any gap that cannot be bridged," Sadat declared in response to a question on the difference over the West Bank. Begin asserted that the Ismailia summit had been "successful."

"I have come here a hopeful Prime Minister and I am leaving a happy man," he declared. "The conference at Ismailia has been successful. We will continue with the momentum of the peace process. Now starts the phase of the most serious negotiations—on details of how to establish peace between Egypt and Israel as part of a comprehensive peace settlement throughout the Middle East."

Begin added that "these two days (of meetings) are very good days for Egypt and for Israel and for peace... My friends and I leave Ismailia with the faith that we have contributed to the peacemaking process and that there is hope that with God's help President Sadat and I and our friends will establish peace...."

In his opening statement, Sadat announced, too, that apart from the establishment of the political and military committees, the Cairo conference itself will be raised to the foreign ministers level. But it was not immediately clear whether the Cairo conference would indeed retain a separate existence as distinct from the political committee, and if so, how and when it would reconvene.

The expectation at Mena House outside Cairo is that the conference will adjourn tomorrow for a few days and the Israeli delegation will fly home, leaving a skeleton staff behind to provide continuity and prepare the physical arrangements for the meetings in January of the "military committee" under Defense Minister Ezer Weizman and Egyptian Minister of War Mohammed Gamassy. But no one could say authoritatively at this point that the military committee would in fact be meeting at the Mena House.

Determined To Keep Spirits High

Plainly determined to keep spirits high despite the differences, Sadat volunteered that since his Jerusalem visit last month "everything has changed.... The world is completely different." The change, he told an Israeli questioner, had "not been abrupt" and reflected the "subconscious" desires of his people, though he conceded that he himself had been overwhelmed by the "extent" to which Egyptians had supported his peace venture.

There was "no fear," Sadat said, that "at the push of a button" (in the questioner's words) there might be "a revival of anything that has happened in the past." He agreed, too, when pressed by another Israeli, that "the key to war and peace in the Mideast" lies in Egypt's hands, but he would not go as far as to say war was impossible without Egypt, nor, of course, that Egypt had irreversibly renounced its war option. He repeated the hope he expressed in Jerusalem that the October 1973 war had been "the last war."

Neither Sadat nor Begin responded in any detail to a question on whether possible troop reduc-

tions and redeployments were envisaged at this early stage of the process. Sadat said "the time is not yet ripe" for an Egyptian football team to play in Tel Aviv.

The Egyptian leader, observers noted, went out of his way to avoid polemics, declining a questioner's invitation to publicly criticize Begin's peace plan or say it was inadequate. He merely noted that the Begin plan would be put before the two committees and Egypt would submit counter-proposals of its own. "I don't want to reveal all we have discussed," he said. He said Begin had "shown his will to end the military government on the western bank.... But we differed over self-determination...."

Omits Pressing For PLO Role

Sadat also omitted pressing for a Palestine Liberation Organization role in the talks or in the subsequent peace settlement. Asked about this he responded by asserting that "the Palestinians must have a role" and that once Egypt and Israel had agreed on a basic "strategy," he would submit it to an Arab summit after which the "Palestinians" would have to negotiate the details of their own settlement with Israel, as would the Syrians.

The PLO's participation was "not excluded" in the future. But for the moment, by joining the rejectionist front, the PLO had "excluded itself." The same was true of the Soviets, Sadat noted.

Begin, for his part, observed that the PLO sought to exterminate Israel "and for us everything is negotiable except our own destruction." He added that a PLO spokesman had recently spoken of assassinating Sadat. "It is both against Israel and against Egypt," Begin said. Significantly, Sadat did not demur.

Begin added that Israel wanted to negotiate with "representatives of the Palestinian Arabs—and this we will do." He appeared to imply that such representatives might be included in the Israeli-Egyptian political committee, but this was not clear.

Egypt Opts For Total Withdrawal

At the end of the press conference Sadat was asked whether Egypt was still demanding total Israeli withdrawal from the occupied areas. He replied: "Quite right." What, then, the questioner asked of Begin, was meant by "progress on the question of withdrawal?"

Begin replied: (United Nations Security Council) "Resolution 242 does not commit Israel to total withdrawal. Therefore, with respect, it is a matter for negotiations to establish those secure and recognized boundaries which are mentioned in the second paragraph of Resolution 242. This is the crux of our problem—to negotiate conditions for peace...."

Asked by an Egyptian reporter if he accepted the preamble to Resolution 242 which bars "the acquisition of territory by force," Begin replied that this principle applied only to a war of aggression, but not to a defensive war such as Israel had fought in 1967.

After the conference, Begin turned to Sadat and said, "That was a wonderful press conference Mr. President." But the serious expressions on the faces of the two men before and after the conference betrayed the wide gulfs still dividing them.

MODIFICATIONS OF EARLIER PEACE PLANS

By Tuvia Mendelson and Yitzhak Shargil

JERUSALEM, Dec. 26 (JTA)—The plans for Sinai and the West Bank proposed by Premier

Menachem Begin to President Anwar Sadat at their Ismailia summit meeting contain important modifications of previous Israeli positions and especially positions publicly stated by Begin in the past. Details published yesterday in Maariv and Yedioth Achronot seemed to have been essentially correct and Begin was furious that they were leaked to the press before they were formally presented to Sadat.

According to the papers, Israel recognizes Egypt's full sovereignty over the Sinai peninsula and will withdraw its forces in stages, over a 3-5 year period, from all of Sinai including Sharm el-Sheikh and the Rafah salient. The withdrawal would begin when full diplomatic relations are established with Egypt. That is to be accomplished in four stages, beginning with the establishment of consulates, diplomatic missions, charges d'affaires and, finally, the exchange of ambassadors.

The territory evacuated by Israel will not be occupied by Egyptian forces. A United Nations force will patrol the stretch between Eilat and Sharm el-Sheikh and the remainder of the zone now occupied by Israel will be demilitarized. Israelis living in the Rafah area and the new coastal town of Yamit will remain under Egyptian sovereignty while retaining Israeli citizenship and will keep arms for self-defense. A civil administration will govern their daily affairs, the papers stated. Significantly, the Cabinet, at its special session last Thursday, revoked an old resolution calling for a permanent Israeli land bridge between Eilat and Sharm el-Sheikh.

The Judea and Samaria regions and the Gaza Strip will be administered over a 20-year interim period by a self-governing body elected by the local population. Security and foreign relations will remain under Israeli control, according to the plan. A combined committee composed of representatives of Israel, Jordan and the local population will determine the extent of Arab immigration into those territories with each party exercising veto power. A similar committee will decide, at the end of the interim period, who will permanently govern the area.

The plan specified that Jewish settlements in the territories will continue but Arabs will also be permitted to settle in Israel. A council for Moslem holy sites will be established including representatives from the Arab states as well as the indigenous Moslem Supreme Council.

Begin Angered By News Leaks

The newspapers were delivered to Begin just as he boarded the El Al plane for Ismailia yesterday and during the 50-minute flight to the Egyptian air base at Abu Sweir, the Premier did little to conceal his anger from the 15 Israeli editors on the aircraft. He regretted that he had yielded to pressure to divulge his plan to the Knesset Foreign Affairs and Security Committee and to the Likud Knesset faction though he would not say which group was responsible for the leak.

Begin's dismay was shared by Moshe Arens, chairman of the Knesset committee. He told the Jerusalem Post today that he would not blame the Premier if he refused to give out any classified information to the committee until absolute security from leaks could be guaranteed. Arens said Begin had been very anxious that Sadat be the first to hear Israel's peace proposals, otherwise negotiations might be impaired.

Begin was accompanied to Ismailia by Foreign Minister Moshe Dayan, Defense Minister Ezer Weizman and a large entourage of legal, political and military advisors and aides. There were no ceremonies at the airport where Cabinet ministers and

Knesset members came to wish the Premier success.

AMBIVALENCE ABOUT ISMAILIA

By Tuvia Mendelson

JERUSALEM, Dec. 26 (JTA)—A general air of optimism prevailed in Israel today following Premier Menachem Begin's summit meeting with President Anwar Sadat of Egypt in Ismailia despite disappointment that the meeting did not produce the anticipated joint statement of principles and realization that the gap between Israel and Egypt on the Palestinian issue remains as wide as ever.

Israelis, who were glued to their television sets throughout Begin's 24-hour sojourn in Ismailia, were encouraged by the fact that the peace-making process appears to have gained momentum from the agreement to establish joint Israeli-Egyptian political and military committees to continue negotiations on the ministerial level.

Their let-down over the lack of an agreement at this stage was due in large measure to expectations stimulated by erroneous local and foreign media reports. Excitement reached a peak yesterday when the Voice of America broadcast that Sadat and Begin would announce agreement on the framework of a peace treaty "in principle."

While public opinion polls indicate that the majority of Israelis support Begin's peace plan, an Israeli "rejectionist" bloc was beginning to take shape that could spell serious political trouble for the Premier among his own hard core constituents. These include the militant Gush Emunim, the Greater Israel Movement, members of Begin's Herut faction and other Likud factions, elements of the Labor Party and Israeli settlers in the occupied territories who are uncertain of their fate should Israeli forces withdraw.

The temper of these groups was reflected by Dr. Herzl Rosenblum, a Yedioth Achronot editorial writer and firm supporter of Begin and Herut, who called the Premier's trip to Ismailia "the new Munich." Rosenblum said Begin must accept criticism because he is apparently unable to "check himself" to see what he is doing.

The Gush Emunim has begun discussions with all other settlement movements, including some affiliated with the Labor Party, on the future of settlements beyond the "green line"—the 1967 borders. The Land of Israel Movement said today that it will organize rallies and demonstrations against Begin's plan and will fight against withdrawal of Israeli forces from the present lines in Sinai and any proposal to grant Arabs on the West Bank and Gaza Strip anything more than limited civilian autonomy on a municipal-regional level.

KAAMEL IS NEW EGYPTIAN FM

CAIRO, Dec. 26 (JTA)—President Anwar Sadat yesterday appointed Egypt's Ambassador to West Germany, Mohammed Ibrahim Kaamel, as his new Foreign Minister. The 50-year-old career diplomat will fill the post left vacant when Foreign Minister Ismail Fahmy resigned last month in protest against Sadat's peace initiative and his decision to visit Jerusalem. Kaamel will lead the Egyptian negotiators when the Cairo conference enters its second stage of talks on the foreign ministers level next month.

A lawyer by profession and son of a former Supreme Court judge, Kaamel became acquainted with Sadat when both were imprisoned by the British during World War II. They have kept up their friendship ever since then. People who know Kaamel well describe him as "straight-forward and very courageous." (By David Landau)

SPECIAL ANALYSIS **THE ISMAILIA SUMMIT** By Gil Sedan

JERUSALEM, Dec. 26 (JTA)—The statement read this morning in Ismailia by President Anwar Sadat indicated that Israel and Egypt have actually reached a broad understanding of the future of the Sinai peninsula. However, the differences on the future of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip remain. The main subject of mutual concern to the two countries, therefore—the nature of the future border—is no longer a major stumbling block. Both leaders agreed that there was considerable progress on this subject.

Thus, the main gap exists on a subject in which Egypt has no direct geographical interest—the West Bank. In other words, Egypt is not yet ready to forego its role as defender of the Palestinians, although it may change its mind in the coming months. In this framework, the function of the two committees which Begin and Sadat decided to establish can be seen more clearly.

The military committee, to convene in Cairo, will deal with the technicalities of withdrawal from Sinai and turn the broad understanding reached in Ismailia into a detailed agreement. The political committee, which will convene in Jerusalem, will have the more difficult task of finding an accepted formula for a settlement in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip.

Too Early To Compromise

Former Foreign Minister Abba Eban said today: "The Ismailia conference was a success, in that one achieved the maximum that could have been achieved there." Indeed, those who expected Begin to return from Ismailia with some kind of a written accord in his hand were expecting miracles. An issue as complex as the Palestinian problem cannot be solved within a 24-hour visit.

Moreover, even if the two parties were willing to compromise—and they actually said that this was the purpose of the two committees—both of them apparently felt that it was too early to compromise. Both of them also apparently agreed that it was time to slow down the momentum which they so proudly achieved.

Meir Amit, Democratic Movement for Change (DMC) Knesset Member, said today in reaction to the Ismailia summit: "It seems they have realized that the fast rate of events was no longer mandatory." Begin himself said today at a press conference upon his return to Israel: "Give us a chance."

Begin needed the time because he is not ready to make further compromises, and he is certainly not ready to convince the hardliners such as Gush Emunim that further concessions are justifiable, not that the Gush Emunim presents any political threat to Begin. But Begin, until now the main spokesman for Greater Israel, wants to postpone an all-out clash with the advocates of Greater Israel and hopes to convince even the smaller groups to support him.

Even the moderate chairman of the Labor Party Shimon Peres, albeit congratulating Begin on the bold decisions made in connection with the peace plan, said Israel offered too much for an opening shot. Analysts noted that Begin could have come back from Ismailia after making further concessions and still win an overwhelming support in the Knesset.

Signal To Arab World

Sadat was much more interested in postponing the hour of decision. By sticking to his old position

of firm support in creation of a Palestinian state on the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, Sadat was actually signalling the Arab world that it was not too late to join the peace talks. Sadat, so far, has not given anything away that could be interpreted as betraying Arab solidarity.

Once an understanding exists on Sinai, the subject of direct mutual interest, discussions can start on the issue of the other occupied territories.

It is perhaps no mere coincidence that before the two committees convene in Cairo and Jerusalem, an important visitor will come to the Mideast—President Carter. He has already indicated his interest in seeing both President Hafez Assad of Syria and Jordan's King Hussein. Carter's efforts will probably be but the first in a renewed attempt to convince those two leaders to join the conference table.

Sadat is not yet ready for a separate agreement with Israel. But the talks in Ismailia definitely paved the road for such an agreement when Sadat feels he can reach no better alternative.

CARTER HOPES SYRIA WILL JOIN TALKS

WASHINGTON, Dec. 26 (JTA)—President Carter expressed hope yesterday that Syria will join the peace negotiations now under way between Israel and Egypt and said that he would like to meet with Syrian President Hafez Assad on this matter. Addressing an impromptu press conference in front of his mother-in-law's home in Plains, Ga., the President noted, however, that the current Egyptian-Israeli talks could continue and agreement could be reached on several key issues without the participation of the Syrians.

Carter's reference to Syria yesterday brought closer the possibility that the President will meet with the Syrian leader during his up-coming trip to six countries starting this week. The President already disclosed that while in Iran, the second stop on his trip, he will confer with King Hussein of Jordan.

"The only territorial matter involving the Syrians is the Golan Heights area," the President said. "Of course, the Syrians are also deeply interested in the question of the Palestinian Arabs and the West Bank as well." He continued: "But there is no reason for them to be directly involved in the negotiations. There could be a complete settlement of the Gaza Strip, West Bank (and) Palestinian Arab question without the Syrians' participation."

Attending the Plains church services yesterday, Carter referred to the Mideast by saying: "I hope everybody will pray that we make progress in the Mideast." He then led a prayer for peace at the congregation of about 125 worshippers.

Meanwhile, Pope Paul VI, in his Christmas Day message yesterday, expressed the hope that the talks between Premier Menachem Begin of Israel and President Anwar Sadat of Egypt in Ismailia would bring peace to the Holy Land and the entire Mideast. The Pope has repeatedly expressed his satisfaction with the recent turn of events in the Mideast.

NEW YORK (JTA)—Alexander Roisman, a leading refusnik from Novosibirsk, has received permission to emigrate to Israel, the Student Struggle for Soviet Jewry and the Union of Councils for Soviet Jews reported. The 50-year-old mechanical engineer had been campaigning for five years to leave the USSR.

There will be no Bulletin dated January 2, New Year's Day, a postal holiday.