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WHAT IS COMPLICATING THE PEACE TALKS?

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Special: In Memoriam — Menachem Begin

The good news is that the Arab confrontation states and the Palestinians are talking with Israel today in peace negotiations, with greater or lesser seriousness of intent. At this point we are seeing more or less what we expected to see: a lot of talking, a certain amount of posturing, and enough forthcomingness on the part of all sides to allow the talks to continue. Nobody seems to want to break off the talks, which is a very good sign in itself. Fortunately, the Israelis are represented at the peace talks by very strong negotiating teams, perhaps the best Israel has to offer.

Six months into the peace talks, however, certain elements accompanying the talks have begun to surface that are complicating their progress. One involves United States President George Bush and the kind of information he has been getting from the field. The second involves the true dimensions of Palestinian moderation, at least among those who are speaking as moderates. The third involves the media's treatment of and impact on the talks. Finally, the impact on the negotiations of the U.S. presidential race cannot be ignored.

What Does George Bush Hear?

What kind of information is being reported to George Bush, especially about the entire settlement issue? Bush, by all evidence, is relying upon the reports of the U.S. Consulate General in Jerusalem, which is not accredited to Israel but to some place called "West Bank," as if this was the name of a country (which they cannot call "Palestine"), rather than just a geographic description. The Consulate is responsible for relaying general information on Israeli actions in Jerusalem and the territories to the U.S. government in Washington.

Last summer I and two American Jewish activists, in Israel for a few months, went out to tour the territories with one of the political affairs officers (PAOs) at the U.S. Consulate to see and hear their perspective on what was happening across the old green line. The PAO did not know who I was so he spoke as he undoubtedly does to all those visiting Americans who are unfamiliar with the area and the situation. As we drove south out of Jerusalem, reaching Bethlehem in less than ten minutes, our official guide began the tour by

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announcing to us that we had entered Arab territory and we were going to see the mistake the Israelis were making by building deep into Arab territory. Then, more in sorrow than in anger, he went on to suggest that we look at the waste of funds because the Israelis will have to evacuate these territories. He also suggested that the Israeli government was irresponsibly putting Israeli civilians in dangerous positions by settling them in the territories. Just south of Bethlehem we turned westward, passing Arab villages every so often along the way, and our guide continued talking about how the Israelis were seizing Arab lands and building on them.

How "Deep in Arab Territory" is Deep?

Our first destination was Betar, a city of 3,000 that seems to have sprung up overnight. The way we approached it, we were given the impression that it was deep in "Arab territory." In fact, when we looked up, I could see that Betar is some 1,300 feet from the old green line, contiguous with the southern end of the Jerusalem corridor, with no Arab villages in between, just a deep valley. Is the U.S. Consulate reporting to George Bush that this city is deep in Arab territory when, in fact, it is located in an area that any Israeli political party except perhaps the most extreme left would demand that it be included within Israel in any final settlement? The widening of the Jerusalem corridor for security reasons is part of the Israeli consensus, the only real question is by how many kilometers. Betar was deliberately built so that its addition would not involve a serious border change, and this by a government that does not believe in returning an inch.

As we know, at least 40 percent of the land in the territories is state land, and another 20 percent is customary-use land such as public grazing land whose ownership was never registered. Therefore, less than half the land in the territories was privately-owned Arab land to begin with. Yet our guide continued to refer to "Arab lands" indiscriminately. Only after questioning did the PAO admit that Israeli building was almost exclusively done on state lands, with some occurring on customary-use lands, and almost none on privately-owned Arab land.

From Betar we went to Efrat, another new city in the Etzion bloc, east of the Jerusalem-Hebron highway, where they were building additional housing. Again we heard about building deep in the heart of Arab territory. Of course, from Efrat one can clearly see the southern neighborhoods of Jerusalem about five miles away.

How Far Will the Americans Go?

Returning to Jerusalem, we travelled northward across town to just past Sanhedria where a new industrial park filled with modern, hit-tech industries has been built within the city's municipal boundaries just across the pre-1967 line. Declaring the park "occupied territory," our guide took out a notebook and had the driver pull up to each gate where he looked at the signs posted by the enterprises and started making notes. He reminded us that any Israeli enterprise that produces in the West Bank cannot take advantage of the Free Trade Agreement between the U.S. and Israel. The State Department has decided to ignore this for the present, he said, but he wanted to make sure that his superiors had up-to-date information on all new companies that have moved into this area of the occupied territories. We then spent the rest of the afternoon entirely within the current municipal boundaries of Jerusalem in the suburban areas to the north, to which he kept referring as "occupied territories."

My friends on the tour, who are active in Peace Now, were by this time themselves upset with our Consulate guide and asked him which were his most helpful and reliable sources for learning about the history of the area. The fellow had a Ph.D. in Middle East Studies from Princeton, but to our amazement the only names he offered were four unfamiliar Egyptians, all of whom write only in Arabic. He did not think, for example, that Bernard Lewis had much to say of value (though he allowed that Lewis wrote well), and had no English-language or Israeli sources to suggest, dismissing all those we proposed. With such a one-sided picture of the present or of the history of the past 100 years, his was by any standards a biased perspective.

One can only think of this tour being taken by visiting U.S. Congressmen, Senators, administration officials, and James Baker, to hear this particular fellow's version of the situation and take action based on his reporting. This type of unbalanced reporting of information about Jewish building in Jerusalem must be having a tremendous impact on Bush and Baker who are not, after all, particularly expert in the Middle East. The result is that Bush has now painted himself into a corner by taking the position that certain of Jerusalem's neighborhoods are "occupied territories" as much as Shechem or Hebron.

While the formal U.S. position may be unchanged since 1967, as the Consulate claims, it has been manifested quite differently over the years. This U.S. official was presenting a position that clearly went

beyond what had been the heart of the American position of the past two decades as presented by earlier Consulate officials, although it may be the American position now. He was not saying that the future of these territories has to be negotiated, but that they were Arab and had to be given back. In that case, the American position has become unfair and certainly no longer "even-handed."

How Moderate are the Palestinians?

I have been meeting with senior Palestinians overseas since 1985 (only in perfectly legal forums, of course). In addition to overseas meetings, the Jerusalem Center has had regular contact with Faisal Husseini, Sari Nusseibeh and Hanna Siniora even earlier, some of whom have come in to the JCPA offices in years past to buy our materials on autonomy and federal solutions.

My most recent contact was the result of a project conducted at the Truman Institute of the Hebrew University with funding from the MacArthur Foundation from the U.S., whose final summary meeting was held just outside of Rome under the official auspices of the Italian Institute for International Affairs. As it turned out, the reason it was held in Rome, instead of in Jerusalem as expected, was because the PLO wanted it that way. The Palestinians also insisted that their share of the funding be channelled through Faisal Husseini's Arab Studies Society, apparently for the same reason.

The project was designed to bring together Israeli and Palestinian academics who would write parallel papers about the technical issues involved in reaching a peace settlement: water, economics, demography, the future of Jerusalem, what is in each others' textbooks, and other topics of that nature. In Italy I discovered that the PLO had exercised a veto over which papers they would allow their people to write and a number of papers parallel to those commissioned by the Truman Institute were never prepared (with the full knowledge of the Israeli project directors, I might add). Moreover, it seems that the PLO insisted on holding the final conference in Rome because they wanted to have their political commissars present. Their "ambassadors" to London, Rome and Brussels were all there to make sure that the Arab academics, some of whom might really have been moderates, would toe the line and not say or do anything beyond what is acceptable to the PLO.

Needless to say, the papers that some of the Israelis wrote were critical of Israeli policies. They were presented, even though the parallel papers by the

Palestinians were not written. For example, there was a paper on the image of Arabs in Israeli textbooks which was self-critical, but there was no parallel paper because the PLO would not allow a paper to be written about the image of Jews in Arab textbooks.

There was a session on democracy in which one of the heads of the Truman Institute, a man of the left since his youth, presented a paper on the decline of Israeli democracy. The Palestinian counterpart paper lauded how democratic the Palestinians are with their basically democratic political culture and tradition. At the end of the presentation, Moshe Amirav, who is very supportive of a two-state solution, asked the Palestinian presenter of his paper, "If you are so democratic, how do you explain all the political murders and assassinations of Palestinians by Palestinians?" The reply: "Oh, any people has the right to eliminate collaborators." That was the end of the discussion about democracy; there was nothing more to be said. This was the manner of the entire conference, showing the bottom line of the Palestinians to be as problematic as ever for Israel.

If most of the Israelis' papers are any reflection, the academic leadership at the Hebrew University is becoming more and more isolated from the society around it in its extreme dovish stance. Fortunately, however, there is always one individual at these gatherings, Moshe Amirav in this case, who, while appearing in the newspapers as a spokesman of the left, is really a true Israeli patriot who can be counted on to stand up to Arab attacks on Israel and Zionism even as he seeks a far-reaching settlement with them.

There is no question about the Palestinians' increased level of sophistication at such conferences. The Palestinian academics know how to participate in an academic discussion on an academic level in an academic tone, at least for the first two days. On the other hand, on the morning of the third day the topic was the Israeli Arabs, called by the Palestinians "the Palestinian Arabs in Israel." They said, "Of course, you are going to have to give autonomy to the Arabs in the Galilee after we get our state. That is part of the package. And of course you will have to give up your Zionist delusions because they are not democratic." Again, their bottom line greatly differs from the opening one.

In the session on Jerusalem there was a joint paper done by Moshe Amirav and Hanna Siniora. They presented their plan to keep Jerusalem unified and shared by enlarging it to include Ramallah on the north and Bethlehem on the south, so that there will be equal Arab and Jewish populations in the city, and then have

a number of self-governing boroughs within a metropolitan authority which will handle Jerusalem's common problems. I doubt that the parity of populations will remain stable or will lead to effective government, but it was an interesting idea. Yet Siniora, who has told me he is viewed among the Palestinians as the Arab equivalent of Peace Now, was strongly attacked by the PLO people for even suggesting such an idea, again calling into question the future of Palestinian moderation.

The Hostile Role of the Media

The media are still bashing Israel, and they have now extended their bashing in several ways. First of all, their material on Israel has crossed the line with regard to anti-Semitism, such as with the recent picture of Eli Rubinstein, the chief Israeli negotiator with Jordan and the Palestinians, that appeared on the front page of the *Herald Tribune*, one that is clearly an anti-Semitic caricature. It is simply a gratuitous picture with no story attached to it, and no newsworthy reason for its publication on the front page. In another example, the *New Yorker* selected Milton Viorst, whose notoriously anti-Zionist views are reminiscent of those of the American Council for Judaism in the old days, to cover the Madrid conference for them. The article that resulted was clearly biased against Israel and its position.

The media also are attacking Israel's handling of the Soviet Jewish aliya, with stories about how Israel is not coping and how the immigrants are disappointed. One recent front-page *Herald Tribune* story was entitled: "Against the Flow, Soviet Jews Go Home." The reporter found one Jewish family that had gone back to Moscow; the husband did not want to go back but his wife insisted. Out of this they created a story that hundreds are going back and, according to him, most are not even registering that they are going back. This would explain the fact that there are no official statistics of more than a few returnees.

Finally, the media are guilty of allowing Patrick Buchanan to get by unscathed with his anti-Semitism. Buchanan is an Irish anti-Semite of the same type as Joseph Kennedy in his time; that is, he does not like the Jews as a group, but this does not preclude him from liking individual Jews. It is not a racist anti-Semitism, in that sense. It is very likely that few Americans who voted for Buchanan did so because of his anti-Semitism, but to register a conservative protest against President Bush, and it is to the credit of the American people that they have largely rejected

Buchanan's message. However, the fact that the media allowed such a brazen anti-Semite to carry the flag of conservative Republicanism does not bode well for the future.

President Bush's Timetable

This brings us to the impact of the U.S. presidential race on the peace negotiations and the realization that the Arabs are not the only problem. The Arabs are certainly a problem but they are a known problem. There is nothing they have done that has been any different from what Israel would have expected them to do.

The biggest problem for Israel is the United States. There is every indication that the U.S. will step in much more actively starting in April. The word from the State Department is that the President wants something tied up by January of 1993, which is a ridiculous schedule for these negotiations. It means that Baker is going to have to step in hard, and the only way he can do that is by discrediting Israel, meaning exactly the kind of difficult times that we now have entered with the loan guarantees and accusations of sales of American technology to third parties.

One effect of all these pressures, however, has been to reunify the Jewish community in the United States. The anti-Semitism issue backfires by uniting Jews. If Israel can count on a united front in the Jewish community, it does become easier for Congressional friends of Israel to support Israel, though it is going to be very hard this time because of the whole anti-foreign aid climate. Bush has decided to paint the loan guarantees not as guarantees but as if they were going to cost the U.S. taxpayer huge amounts of money. American Jewry may not have done enough to try to counter that image, but, again, the media does not give them a platform for doing so.

It is doubtful that the peace talks will have progressed to the point of actually negotiating about something concrete by January of 1993. After the elections, even with Bush continuing as president, the urgency should diminish. The problem will be if Bush tries to push up the pace; he may want something tangible before November. However, the current devaluation of foreign affairs among the American electorate works to Israel's advantage. Bush will not get that much credit for being involved in the Middle East. Moreover, he yet may need even the modest Jewish support that Republicans get in his election battle. This may lead the administration to take back its dismissal of the Jews, as Baker so vulgarly put it.

(The danger in Baker's reported comment is not that the administration wants to do Jews in, but rather that it no longer considers Jews of any real importance.)

Despite these many complications, all the sides in the talks seem to want to make some real progress toward peace. That is why even Syria is staying in. Many Palestinians feel they made a mistake in not accepting the autonomy Begin offered in 1979 and 1980, because they might have had a state by now, at least according to some. In that sense they have everything to gain by accepting autonomy and very little to lose, so they may well move along in that direction.

The danger that arises from granting the Palestinians autonomy would be that they would sooner or later de-

clare an independent state, the world would recognize it, and Israel would be stuck. If Israel stands fast, the Palestinians may start backing into more negotiable positions because, hopefully, they would realize that if they do not get something this time, it could be ten years before another such opportunity arises.

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IN MEMORIAM — MENACHEM BEGIN

It is becoming clear that the two people who stand head and shoulders above the other founders of Israel are Menachem Begin and David Ben-Gurion. In that sense, Begin has come into his own only in the last few years.

Each of these two great men drew a very important lesson in their own lives and behavior from the failures of the Jewish people at the time of the Second Commonwealth, failures that indeed led to the destruction of the Second Temple and the Second Commonwealth. The lessons they learned, as they themselves have written, were important operative principles in their lives.

Ben-Gurion drew the lesson from the fall of Judea that the Jewish people as a small people and the Jewish state as inevitably a small state could not afford to be at odds with the superpower that dominated in its sphere, and that the Judean challenge of Rome was a dreadful mistake. For Ben-Gurion this meant that with the United States dominant in the eastern Mediterranean, Israel had to somehow come under the protective American umbrella and maintain reasonably good relations with the United States. He had terrible fights with what was at that time a far more left-oriented Labor camp which included strong Marxian-socialist parties that still thought of Stalin as a great hero and were not to be disabused of that for another eight years after the state was established. Ben-Gurion fought with them to bring Israel into a better relationship with the United States and he followed that as his principle all of his life. Indeed, his thinking ultimately led him to announce publicly after the Six-Day War that he thought Israel should return all the territories except Jerusalem and the Golan and get rid of the problem quickly.

The lesson Menachem Begin drew was that the major reason for the destruction of the Second Commonwealth was civil war among Jews. Since we Jews have a propensity for it, he vowed that he would do everything in his power to prevent such a thing. One of the greatest moments in his life, certainly the most significant for Jewish history, was when he boarded the ship Altalena after it came under attack from the Israeli army, at Ben-Gurion's direct order, to prevent it from bringing in needed arms for the Israeli forces in violation of the UN-imposed truce in 1948, and refused to give the order to fire back. For Ben-Gurion, he was willing to take that risk rather than risk alienating the United States, so he ordered opening fire. Israel Galili and his other advisors at that time were ready to go to the limit. But Begin would not fire back.

So, too, when the Haganah was pursuing Etzel members at the orders of Ben-Gurion and the others of the Jewish Agency Executive, the governing body of the Yishuv at the time, Begin did not reply in kind. Indeed, Begin, who was so vocally critical of the Ben-Gurion government and the other Labor governments in the 1950s and 1960s, never said a word against the Israeli government outside the borders of Israel. Whatever criticism he would make within Israel, he took the proper position that outside the country, a member of the loyal opposition is not only opposition but is also loyal and does not attack his government in public.

Begin, indeed, was a great democrat. He believed very strongly in parliamentary democracy, perhaps excessively in some ways. As we now see, there are more flaws in the parliamentary system than perhaps he was willing to face, but, in public and quiet ways, he was one of the major architects of the idea of parliamentary democracy in Israel and was important in its becoming rooted in the country. His contributions in this area have yet to be fully recognized.

Begin was also the leader most responsible for closing the gap between Ashkenazim and Sephardim in Israel. By making political space and giving political opportunity to the Sephardic olim of African and Asian background, he ended what would have been more than a festering sore in the body politic. We should remember that before the state, the Etzel was the force where there was most equality between the communities, not the Haganah. That also was Begin's doing. So his association as a bridge-builder between the communities goes way back to his first coming to Israel. When he declared, as he frequently used to, "*Yehudim Anakhnu!*" (We are Jews!), he meant it. He saw the world that way.

Finally, Menachem Begin closed the gap in Israel's public life between Israeli civil society and Jewish tradition. Every society has a civil religion, those symbols and expressions which are the property of the commonality of the whole country and which evoke the emotions that make people feel that they belong to each other and to the country. In the days of Labor movement dominance of the state, Labor, which was very secular in its earliest years, tried to pour new wine into old bottles by taking symbols such as Jewish holidays and trying to give them socialist Zionist content. Labor tried to separate, as it were, traditional Judaism from the expressions and the symbols of the new Israel. Begin ended that.

Begin deliberately and consciously made every effort to identify the civil religion of the state with traditional Judaism and that, too, was a major step. He even acted on this belief after his death by having arranged his burial next to his wife in the traditional Jewish burial place on the Mount of Olives, in what is today an exclusively Arab section of Jerusalem, with a simple, traditional Jewish funeral. The country was ripe for this identification with tradition and Menachem Begin made another major contribution in this way. *Yehe Zikhro Baruch* (May his memory be a blessing).

— Daniel J. Elazar

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Urban Revitalization: Israel's Project Renewal and Other Experiences

Edited by Daniel J. Elazar and Zvi R. Marom

Israel, though a young country, has had to quickly house hundreds of thousands of new immigrants and the construction, done hurriedly, soon resulted in a need for renewal. In addition, Israel understood how poor physical conditions contribute to the generation of social problems. It sought to properly combine physical and social renewal in a massive countrywide human effort. That effort involved the active support and participation of diaspora Jewry through a process of twinning diaspora Jewish communities with urban neighborhoods and towns designated for renewal. The rich experience of that first decade of renewal was deemed worthy of bringing to the attention of the international urban revitalization community.

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Contents: Part I - Renewal and Community; Part II - Israel's Project Renewal; Part III - The Renewal Experience in Other Countries; Part IV - Interjurisdictional Dimensions of Urban Revitalization; Part V - Planning, Renewal, and the Urban Environment; Part VI - Grassroots Organization, Resident Involvement and Community Leadership; Part VII - Health, Education, and Welfare in Project Renewal; Part VIII - Phasing Down and Continuity.

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