

Israel's Peace Plan

Introduction

Detailed negotiations concerning the peace treaty, initiated in the course of President Sadat's visit to Jerusalem and continued in Cairo by the Director-General of the Prime Minister's Office, Elyahu Ben Elissar, promised to be long and complicated. On 14 December 1977 Prime Minister Begin travelled to the U.S. in order to present to President Carter a peace plan, providing *inter alia* for autonomy for the Arab inhabitants of the Gaza Strip. Carter considered the plan to be a sound basis for negotiations. On 25 December 1977 Begin travelled to Ismailia. At his meeting with Sadat several major discrepancies emerged. Begin was willing to accept a formula concerning a solution to the problems of the Palestinians, while Sadat insisted on the Palestinian problem, as well as on a commitment from Israel to withdraw not only from the Sinai but also from the Golan Heights, the Gaza Strip, Judea and Samaria, all this no doubt in view of the vehement Arab reaction to Sadat's visit and Egypt's growing isolation.

No joint communique was achieved but at a joint press conference Sadat announced an agreement to continue the dialogue within the framework of a political committee convening in Jerusalem and a military one convening in Cairo.

Soon after his return Begin reported to the Knesset.

Sitting 61 of the Ninth Knesset

28 December 1977 (18 Tevet 5738)

The Speaker, Y. Shamir: I hereby open the Knesset sitting....I welcome the Prime Minister back from the peace mission to Ismailia. I give the floor to the Prime Minister.

The Prime Minister, M. Begin: Mr. Speaker, Knesset Members, once peace is established we propose introducing administrative autonomy for the Arab inhabitants of Judea, Samaria and the Gaza District, on the basis of the following principles:

The administration of the Military Government in Judea, Samaria and the Gaza District will be cancelled, to be replaced by administrative autonomy of and for the Arab inhabitants. The inhabitants of those areas will elect an Administrative Council consisting of eleven members which will act on the basis of the principles laid down in this document. Every citizen aged eighteen or more, irrespective of citizenship and in-

cluding those without citizenship, will be entitled to vote for the Administrative Council. Every citizen aged twenty-five or more on the day the list of candidates is submitted will be eligible for election to the Administrative Council. The Administrative Council will be elected by general, direct, personal, equal and secret elections. The Administrative Council will serve for four years from the day it is elected and will sit at Bethlehem. All the administrative affairs concerning the Arab inhabitants of Judea, Samaria and the Gaza District will come under the jurisdiction of the Administrative Council.

The Administrative Council will comprise the following departments: education; religious affairs; finance; transport; construction and housing; industry, commerce and tourism; agriculture; health; labor and welfare; refugee rehabilitation; administration of justice and supervision of the local police force. The Administrative Council will issue regulations pertaining to the activities of these departments. Security and public order in Judea, Samaria and the Gaza District will be in the hands of the Israeli authorities. The Administrative Council will elect its chairman. Its first sitting will be held thirty days after the publication of the election results.

Thus far, Mr. Speaker, with reference to the administrative expression of autonomy for the Arab inhabitants of Judea, Samaria and the Gaza District. And now to address the parliamentary expression.

The inhabitants of Judea, Samaria and the Gaza District, irrespective of citizenship, and including those without citizenship, will be given the option of receiving Israeli or Jordanian citizenship....The inhabitants of those areas who opt for Israeli citizenship will be entitled to vote for and be elected to the Knesset, in accordance with the Elections Law; those who have or opt for Jordanian citizenship will be entitled to vote for and be elected to the parliament of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, in accordance with that country's elections law....Questions arising from the vote of inhabitants of Judea, Samaria and the Gaza District to the Jordanian parliament will be clarified by negotiations between Israel and Jordan.

A committee comprising representatives of Israel, Jordan and the Administrative Council will be established to examine existing legislation in Judea, Samaria and the Gaza District, to determine what legislation shall be maintained and what annulled, and to decide what the Administrative Council's legislating authority shall be. The decisions of that committee will be reached unanimously.

The inhabitants of Israel will be entitled to purchase land and settle in Judea, Samaria and the Gaza District. The Arab inhabitants of Judea, Samaria and the Gaza District who have opted for Israeli citizenship will be entitled to purchase land and settle in Israel.

A committee comprising representatives of Israel, Jordan and the Administrative Council will be established to determine the immigra-

tion laws to Judea, Samaria and the Gaza District. The committee will determine the rules whereby Arab refugees from outside Judea, Samaria and the Gaza District may be permitted to immigrate into those areas to a reasonable extent. The decisions of the immigration committee will be reached unanimously.

The inhabitants of Israel, Judea, Samaria and the Gaza District will be assured freedom of movement and economic activity in Israel, Judea, Samaria and the Gaza District. The Administrative Council will appoint one of its members to represent it before the government of Israel in order to discuss current concerns, and one of its members to represent it before the government of Jordan for the same purpose....

Israel insists on its right and claim for sovereignty over Judea, Samaria and the Gaza District. Knowing that other claims exist, it proposes—for the sake of the agreement and the peace—that the problem of sovereignty over these areas remain open. A special proposal will be prepared and submitted regarding the administration of the sites which are holy to the three faiths in Jerusalem, guaranteeing freedom of access to the members of all the religions to their holy places. The above principles may be reexamined after a period of five years....

Clause 11 of our plan reads: "Security and public order in Judea, Samaria and the Gaza District will be in the hands of the Israeli authorities." Without that clause there is no significance to the program for administrative autonomy....

T. Toubi (Democratic Front for Peace and Equality): It is the continuation of the occupation. How can there be peace if the occupation continues...?

The Prime Minister, M. Begin: If it were proposed that we withdraw our army from Judea, Samaria and Gaza, on no account would we allow the murderous organization known as the PLO, the basest organization of murderers in history, apart from the Nazi organizations, to assume control in those areas....It boasts of the murders it has perpetrated and threatens to solve the problems of the Middle East with one bullet in the heart of President Sadat of Egypt, as its predecessors did in the Al-Aksa Mosque with King Abdullah....Small wonder that the Egyptian government has said that if that bullet is fired it will reply with a million bullets. We want to say that on no account will that organization be allowed to take control of Judea, Samaria and Gaza. If we were to withdraw, that is precisely what would happen.

Consequently, let it be clear to anyone who wishes to reach an agreement with us that the IDF will remain in Judea, Samaria and Gaza and that there will also be other security arrangements, so that all the Jewish and Arab inhabitants of the Land of Israel can live in peace and security....

Clause 24 reads: "Israel insists on its right and claim to sovereignty over Judea, Samaria and the Gaza District. Knowing that there are other claims, it proposes—for the sake of the agreement and the peace—that the problem of sovereignty in these areas remain open."

I said these things to both President Carter of the U.S. and President Sadat of Egypt. We have the right and the claim to sovereignty over those parts of the Land of Israel. It is our country, and belongs to the Jewish people by right. We want an agreement and peace; we know that there are at least two other claims to sovereignty over those areas. If there is a mutual desire to reach an agreement and bring peace, what is the way to do it? If these conflicting claims remain and there is no answer to the clash between them, there will be no agreement between the sides. Consequently, in order to enable an agreement to be made and peace to be attained, there is only one way: to decide to agree that the question of sovereignty remain open and to deal with people, with nations, namely: the Arabs of the Land of Israel should receive administrative autonomy, and the Jews of the Land of Israel true security. That is the fairness of the content of the proposal, and that is how it was received abroad too....

With this plan and the proposal for the settlement of the relations between Israel and Egypt, which I will detail immediately, I went to the U.S. and President Carter....The second part, namely, the arrangements for settling the relations between Egypt and Israel in connection with a peace treaty, is as follows: Demilitarization—the Egyptian army will not cross the line of the Gidi and Mitla passes, and the agreement to reduce the forces will remain in effect between the Suez Canal and this line. The Israeli settlements will remain where they are and will be linked to Israeli administration and jurisdiction. They will be defended by Israeli forces. I will repeat that phrase for reasons known to the Knesset Members—they will be defended by Israeli forces. There will be a transition period of several years, during which the IDF will remain on the defense line in the central Sinai, and Israeli airfields and warning installations will remain in place until our forces withdraw to the international border. Freedom of navigation will be assured in the Straits of Tiran, which will be recognized as an international waterway which must be open to all navigation under whatever flag. This will be made clear in a special statement to be issued by the two countries, the waterway to be kept open either by a U.N. force, which can be withdrawn only with the consent of both countries and the unanimous agreement of the Security Council, or by joint Egyptian-Israeli military patrols.

I went with this peace plan to President Carter of the U.S. I met with him *tete-a-tete* and on that occasion as well as during the talks between the U.S. and the Israeli delegations he expressed his positive assessment of the plan. On Saturday night, at our second and concluding

meeting, the U.S. President stated that the plan was a fair basis for peace negotiations.

Vice President Mondale and Secretary of State Vance, as well as other leading U.S. officials and senators, and leaders of the Jewish community, also expressed their approval of the plan....On my way home from America I stopped in London and put our peace plan before the Prime Minister and Foreign Minister of England, and they found it to be a most constructive plan. I also submitted the plan to the special representative of the President of France....

While I was in the U.S. I asked the Secretary of State to inform President Sadat that I wished to consult him, whether in Cairo, a neutral spot or, if he so wished, in Ismailia. I mentioned Ismailia because when President Sadat visited Jerusalem we spoke of it as a possible meeting place. The President of Egypt informed me via the Secretary of State that he chose Ismailia as the site of our meeting. I agreed. And so, a few days after the conclusion of my mission to the U.S. and Britain, the meeting in Ismailia took place.

Mr. Speaker, it was a successful meeting. Its success came at its beginning. President Sadat and I held a personal conversation, and the main point—the continuation of the negotiations between the two countries for the attainment of a “peace treaty,” rather than the phrase “peace agreement,”—was achieved during the first five minutes of the conversation. These negotiations will be held at a high level, the committees being: political, to be situated in Jerusalem; and military, to be situated in Cairo. The chairmen of the committees will be the Foreign Ministers and Ministers of Defense of Egypt and Israel. The chairmanship of the committees will alternate: our Foreign Minister will open the committee meetings in Jerusalem; the Egyptian Foreign Minister will open the meetings of the military committee in Cairo. One week later the chairmen will rotate. The political committee will deal with the civilian settlements in the Sinai peninsula, and with what might be termed the Jewish-Arab moral issue of the Arabs of the Land of Israel. The military committee will deal with all the military problems connected with the peace treaty regarding the Sinai Peninsula.

And so, Mr. Speaker, for the first time after almost thirty years, in another two weeks, direct, face-to-face negotiations will begin between accredited, ministerial representatives of Israel, and accredited representatives of Egypt, its Foreign Minister and Minister of Defense. No third man shall take the chair at those committees, as was customary in all the meetings between us and the Arab countries, the ministers themselves conducting the meetings and alternating the chairmanship.

The negotiations will be thorough and detailed, focusing on both political and security aspects, so that agreement and a peace treaty may be attained. Because this is happening for the first time since the establishment of the state, for the first time after five wars, for the first time

after statements from various sides that the State of Israel must be destroyed, we must welcome this shift and hope and pray that during the weeks or months while the committees are working they will reach agreement, and if there is agreement, that it will serve as a basis for the peace treaty which in this case will be signed by the authorized representatives of Israel and Egypt.

It can be said that at the Ismailia meeting both sides agreed to make a joint statement, but it was not issued because the two delegations did not reach agreement regarding the problem which we, rightly, call the problem of the Arabs of the Land of Israel, and which the Egyptians—as is their right—term the Palestinian problem. We tried, we made a great effort to reach a joint formulation. But it transpired that we could not....We postponed Sunday's meeting to Monday on the assumption that if both sides made an effort a solution would be found, as was indeed the case.

Agreement of a kind was reached on a joint formula, on the basis of the precedents of international conferences, after we proposed—and this was accepted—that each side should determine its position and use its phraseology. Consequently, the statement regarding the problem of the Arabs of the Land of Israel, as was read out by the President of Egypt at our joint press conference, was in two parts, namely: “The position of Egypt is that a Palestinian state should be established in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip.” And the second part: “The Israeli position is that the Palestinian Arabs residing in Judea, Samaria and the Gaza District should enjoy self-rule.”

Because of the difference on this issue the statement on which there was complete agreement was not published. We did not see fit to press for the publication of a joint communique if the Egyptian side said that under those conditions it could not sign it. But I should point out that the actual content was agreed on by both delegations.

A. Yadlin (Alignment): What content...?

The Prime Minister, M. Begin: If it was not published, why should it be published in the Knesset?

A. Yadlin (Alignment): I fail to understand how the settlements will be defended by Israeli forces if the IDF withdraws to the international border.

The Prime Minister, M. Begin: That will be part of the debate....

A. Yadlin (Alignment): There are differences of opinion between us regarding Yamit.

The Prime Minister, M. Begin: Mr. Speaker, with the completion of the meeting at Ismailia we have done our part. We have given what we can. Henceforth, the ball is in the other court. For peace, for a peace treaty, we

have taken upon ourselves a heavy burden of responsibility and risks....

At this very moment and ever since my return from the U.S., a difficult and painful discussion has been conducted between my best friends and myself. From this podium I will say, as I told them, that if it has been ordained that I should conduct this argument, I will do it with love. They are my friends. We have gone a long way together, in good times and bad, and I love and respect them, as I will continue to do. But there is no alternative. You have to accept responsibility with the same degree of civil courage without which there are no political decisions.

It is obvious to me that we are taking the right course to enable a peace treaty to be negotiated and signed. After examining all the other courses...I have no doubt that the only way to enable negotiations to be held and a peace treaty to be signed is the one proposed by the government. Consequently, if it is necessary to argue on this issue with dear and close friends, we will do so....

If the routine thinking of officials in the Egyptian Foreign Ministry leads them to assume that they will be able to exert international pressures on us to accept their positions, to which we do not agree and which we will not accept, they are mistaken. We are accustomed to having pressure exerted on us and refusing to give in....But I am sure that no international pressure will be put on Israel....The people who praised our peace plan as being fair, constructive and a breakthrough are very serious men. They are aware of its full content, apart from certain adjustments which do not alter the essence of the plan and which have been brought to the notice of our American friends. This is the plan I brought before President Carter and President Sadat, and they cannot change their minds at the behest of the routine thinkers of the Egyptian Foreign Ministry....

We have today massive moral support throughout the U.S., both in the Administration, in both houses of Congress, and, last but not least, among U.S. public opinion....That is why the routine thinkers of the Egyptian Foreign Ministry are deluding themselves if they think that we will accept their outdated formulae which are totally divorced from reality if international pressure is brought to bear on us. It will not be brought to bear, and we will continue on our course of bringing peace to the nation in Israel and the Middle East, because that has been my desire not since May or June of 1977 but since November and December of 1947 when, after an interval of peaceful relations between the Arabs and Jews of Palestine, the first shot was fired at a Jew by an Arab, and when I appealed to the Arabs of Palestine from the underground not to shed Jewish blood and to build the country together to the benefit of both peoples. But the bloodshed continued, there were five wars and we want to put an end to them by establishing peace and signing peace treaties.

T. Toubi (Democratic Front for Peace and Equality): How can the country be built up, how can there be cooperation, when one side wants to suppress the other...?

The Prime Minister, M. Begin: Is your sitting here an expression of suppression?

T. Toubi (Democratic Front for Peace and Equality): Don't obscure the issue of a nation which wants independence and its own state.

The Prime Minister, M. Begin: Our object, and, I am sure, that of the whole House, with the possible exception of one party group, is to bring peace to this country after having liberated it....

...

S. Peres (Alignment): Mr. Speaker, distinguished Knesset, this House has not lost its shared hope, a hope which sweetens discord and bridges gaps, that the rock of peace which is being rolled up the hill has not lost its momentum and will continue to ascend to its goal at the summit. We approve of the government's policy of peace, even though we disapprove of considerable sections of it. We will be counted among those who seek to inspire hopes rather than those who pour cold water on things.

I would like to start by expressing my admiration for the government and the Prime Minister on several points. Even though it is difficult, to quote Anatole France, "to distinguish between the outcome of wisdom and the product of luck," I must say that the government has devoted itself to both these, with their concomitant tempo. The Prime Minister did not hesitate, despite the dangers of being hasty, to apply political oil to the wheels of the chariot of events, and gallop with it from the shores of the hazards of war to those of the hopes of peace. There is no point thinking that tomorrow it will be easier to conduct peace negotiations. "If not now, then when?" is the question most suited to the effort to attain peace.

I also have praise for the Prime Minister's readiness to make decisions, even to abandon certain assumptions to which he adhered in the past, to propose concessions, to agree to compromises and to delineate withdrawals, in order to create the background for the possibility of an agreement. I know that it is not simple and doubtless involves pain, but the nation must be told the truth: there is no way of attaining peace without compromises and concessions. In war one has to take the other side's army into account and seek to defeat it; in peace one has to take the other side's aspirations into account and seek to meet them halfway.

Knowing that this is both essential and difficult, as the responsible opposition we will not criticize the government in any way for its readiness to take the course of compromises and concessions. We will not castigate it for its willingness to relinquish territory, to abandon previous positions, to grope in the dark of negotiations so that peace may

eventually emerge. Moreover, despite the fact that we are very critical of parts of the government's plan, we will not take parliamentary steps to impede its implementation, because we know that the alternative at this time is not a plan of ours but the failure of the negotiations, and we do not want that.

Mr. Speaker, for thirty years, as President Sadat said in his speech to the Knesset, Egypt tried to ignore Israel...It is a fiction to say that the change in the attitude to peace depends on Israel and not on Egypt. To the best of my knowledge, there is no rejection front in Israel. The rejection front is a purely Arab phenomenon.

Like all the Prime Ministers who preceded him, Mr. Begin aspired to meet with the President of Egypt. The change is in the President of Egypt, not in the prime ministers of Israel. We congratulate the President of Egypt for that and have every admiration for his welcome initiative. But just as he, the President of Egypt, demands concessions from us, it must also be made clear to him that without concessions on his part too it will be very difficult to attain peace. The peace negotiations have been bogged down in the past because of the selfsame difficulties which have been encountered now. Namely, not because of the geographical or political issues but because of the link with Judea and Samaria. I am not surprised that the government has also learned something which some have tried to forget, i.e., that Egypt waged war on us, at least in the War of Independence, also because of the Palestinian issue. It also hoped to damage Israel and refused to conclude peace negotiations with us for that very reason. I must admit that it has adhered to that position, at least in public, with hardly any change, until this moment.

I am sure that the entire House appreciates Sadat's visit and hopes that both our Knesset and the Egyptian parliament will go towards one another with a new readiness and new attitudes. We disagree with the government both because on several basic aspects our point of departure is different and because the course of the negotiations has taught us that a tack different from the one taken by the government should have been adopted. Allow me first of all to indicate the difference in the points of departure:

First, despite our link to the heritage of our fathers, we must distinguish between heritage and state. The land may always remain an historic heritage, but the character of the state is generally determined by the prevailing demographic situation, both actually and potentially, that is, today and tomorrow. We are convinced that the Jewish character of the State of Israel at present and in the future must be maintained. No one can change this country's past, but the future of peace makes a change in the borders of the past necessary. Even the Herut Movement acknowledged this when it dropped the demand for the East Bank of the Jordan River from its platform. We agreed to Partition in 1947. We refrained from imposing Israeli law in 1967. We expressed readiness to

reach a compromise in order to maintain Jewish sovereignty and true peace with the Arabs.

The second point of departure is that the entire peace agreement must ensure not only Israel's independence but also the independence of its defense. Whether there is a defense treaty or not, we cannot deprive the generations to come of the minimum territory required for our survival. This underlies our policy regarding defensible borders, settlements and territories. The settlements were established for that reason, and that reason still holds.

Thirdly, we all respect our Arab, Moslem, Christian and Druse neighbors, and the Arab desire for independence. But just as that requires that in Arab countries there should be non-Arab minorities, it also apparently requires that there should be a non-Jewish minority in Israel. We have no aspirations to rule Arab settlements which are not in Israel, just as we have no intentions of discriminating against the Arabs who live in Israel.

A fourth point of departure: we think that the way to peace is through compromise in government, time, territory, but not in the life-span of peace. Hence our opposition to the establishment of another Palestinian state between us and the Kingdom of Jordan. A state of that kind, more than being an independent framework, would be an excuse for continual aggression and geographical difficulty which would fan the flames of war.

Knesset Members, these assumptions have led us to several tactical and diplomatic conclusions, some of which have in effect been adopted by the government. We said that the background had to be prepared to the Geneva Conference or a concluding conference elsewhere, as in fact was done. We said that it had to be coordinated with the U.S., of whose sincere desire to further peace in the Middle East we are convinced, and this was also done. We proposed, and still do, that interim arrangements should not be rejected. My impression is, Mr. Prime Minister, that you adopted that approach, because the clauses regarding Judea, Samaria and Gaza in the program you read out are marked by their interim nature—

The Prime Minister, M. Begin: If that is so, you have every reason for voting for the plan.

S. Peres (Alignment): There are other reasons too, provided you adopt them. Wait a bit, you're on the right course. The interim nature of the clauses pertaining to Judea, Samaria and Gaza are evident since sovereignty is not defined, the borders are not marked, the form of government is not finalized and the time-limit proposed does not exceed five years....The Arabs will doubtless wish to shorten that period.

Our other criticisms are still valid too. We think that the government has gone too far in its proposals regarding the Sinai as an opening

gambit. It seems that by submitting those proposals at this early stage you will not help to soften the Egyptian position regarding Judea and Samaria, and it is doubtful whether these proposals will be accepted by Egypt....It is reported that the Egyptians are themselves surprised by Israel's proposals regarding the Sinai...and that they are ready to give Yamit sovereignty. That is quite something.

We should remember that even according to Resolution 242 there is room for border adjustments in order to create secure borders. Taking the vast area of the Sinai into consideration...why did the government not demand minor adjustments on the international border, for example, a territorial strip ten or twenty miles wide west of the international border, a strip which would give our planes room to breathe and land to our settlements and brigades?

We also think that the government is closing its eyes to the true alternative in Judea and Samaria. In the long run important parts of those areas could become associated with Jordan or serve as a base for the PLO. We are not agents of the Jordanian crown, but anyone who rejects the PLO must accept Jordan.

The advantages of a Jordanian connection are evident, making it possible to issue Jordanian passports to the inhabitants of Gaza too. Because if the Prime Minister says that the option will be open, it is not in his hands. Can he tell the inhabitants of Gaza to take a Jordanian or an Israeli passport? A link with Jordan creates the possibility of organizing the defense of the entire Land of Israel from invasion from the outside or treachery from within. A link of this kind will transfer the principal concern with the PLO to Jordan, and Jordan has proved that it can deal with that problem. Moreover, Jordan can decide what its relations with the PLO are to be without publicity or political pressure.

A link with Jordan enables all the sides to draw defensible borders based on a political rather than a security compromise. Even if that approach is acceptable at present to the King of Jordan, we must not forget that the real interests of the Egyptians, the Jordanians, the Palestinians, the Israelis, and, I venture to add, the Saudi Arabians, lead towards ensuring that the African Rift is not open to forces which threaten stability, peace and freedom in our region.

The government's proposal lacks those advantages, but contains other disadvantages. For linguistic reasons, the Prime Minister prefers the Greek term "autonomy" and the English term "self-rule" to "self-government" and its connotations....Giving a choice between an Israeli and a Jordanian passport raises the possibility, at least in the Gaza Strip, that Jordanian passports will not be issued, but the Israeli passport will indicate to the refugees that it might be feasible to demand their lands and property in Israel too.

Although the proposal regarding the right to mutual settlement enables the inhabitants of the territories to purchase land in Israel, it

grants parallel rights to Israelis, since the lands of both the Wakf and the government will be subject to the Administrative Council which will be established. Incidentally, you may have doubts about Jordan, yet you proposed a tripartite council with a Jordanian representative; in other words, there are both doubts and hopes, which reinforces my argument on this issue. Private landowners in Judea and Samaria will always be subject to intimidation by Jordanian law, which imposes the death penalty on anyone who sells land to Jews.

The government's plan suffers not only from unclear definitions but also from the pressure of its temporary nature. If it can be questioned in five years' time, does anyone imagine that the Arab side will omit to do so? Does anyone seriously expect the Arabs to sit quietly for five years and do nothing, simply waiting for the "review," and drawing closer to Israel rather than becoming more extreme...? And what side will be taken by world public opinion, which supports us today, partly because of the concessions we have made...? Will it support the side which advocates the continuation of the interim situation, that is, us, or will it support those who demand a permanent solution which takes the existing population in the territories into account?

In the absence of Jordan from the plan, will the PLO also be absent? And with the constant threat of the PLO there is no way of knowing what the results of rule of that kind will be. In my view, the government has erred in choosing its direction. It might have been able to avoid some of these mistakes if it had adhered to parliamentary procedures, whose object is not merely to give respect to the parliament but to add understanding, resourcefulness and experience to the government itself. Parliamentary regimes, for all their drawbacks and leaks, are far stronger than closed regimes....

We know that the Ismailia conference was not a complete success, but it was successful. We welcome the establishment of the two committees. A security committee in Cairo and peace in Jerusalem is preferable to a conference in Geneva for procedural purposes. That is direct and important negotiation, and its importance cannot be doubted. Despite the difficulties which have come to the surface...I do not accept the Prime Minister's optimistic line. I think he is being overoptimistic, because in the nature of things the difficulties are not dependent solely on us. But there is no reason to despair....

At the same time, we all know that the alternative to peace negotiations, whether in the form of Soviet arms or U.S. pressure or the renewal of the military option, no longer offers much to the Arab side. And the alternative of returning to the previous situation does not exist and is not desirable for Israel. Postponement will not help and evasion will do no good.

We aspire towards bringing a new order to the Middle East, not one which is based on wars, occupation and conquests, but one based on

peace, good-neighborliness and mutual respect. The whole House is agreed that Israel's hand should remain extended in peace. We are open to new ideas, and the unity of this House for true peace, whether the government's or the opposition's, remains firm, good and promising. We will make our own positive proposals and vote for them. We will not vote against the government's decisions, just as we cannot vote for them because of the deficiencies I have mentioned....We will permit all our members to vote as they choose.

...

M. Zorea (Democratic Movement for Change): Madam Speaker, distinguished Knesset...before addressing the government's plan, permit me to direct a few words to my colleagues throughout the House. Our efforts today must be directed towards the future, consequently let us not turn the debate into a narrow, party-political discussion of the past. Let us review the issues, without making any allusions. Just as Sadat did not reply when he was asked why he had not taken action during the past thirty years, the question is equally irrelevant as regards which government is responsible for today's achievements....The debate is an historical one, and should be left to history. Today, then, we must take our political problems to the national level, with our sights fixed on the future.

I would like to address the problem of mutuality and political momentum. Sadat came to Jerusalem. The whole world—including us, to my regret—overreacted in expressing admiration for this. The mere fact of his coming was recorded as an historic event. We must not belittle that event, because it was indeed a turning-point for him and us, signifying the recognition of Israel's existence with Jerusalem as its capital, something which no other Arab leader has done to this day, although our existence needs no imprimatur from Sadat...and he recognized our right to live in security, and we must make him keep his bond on that score. To date we have not done that, unfortunately. That pledge of his contradicts his unbending stand on what he calls "the lands," for example....

At Ismailia we began from the end, as it were....We have nothing left to give or relinquish. We have already gone too far in making concessions, especially in the Sinai. Consequently, we must not let a situation in which the momentum demanded of us erodes us from within, while Sadat's inertia, i.e., the fact of his having come here, is regarded as momentum for him. As if by coming here he has made his contribution. Of this the Prophet said: "Therefore hell hath enlarged herself, and opened her mouth without measure." I think we are on the edge of that abyss, if not beyond it.

Our security cannot be based solely on the goodwill of one ruler, international institution or Power or another....Our security cannot be based solely on warning systems or technology. Our security will be

based first and foremost and amongst other things on territory, which is essential for defense and for settlement...For us that is a precondition for our existence, while for Sadat, in the Sinai, for example, it is not an existential condition. We abandoned that condition too much in the Sinai. We could have begun with far less as an initial starting-point, as MK Peres has proposed and others doubtless will.

All the same, the government, led by Mr. Menahem Begin, has done well in preparing the way to peace since its establishment. It is to be congratulated and supported for that. It is doubtful whether the momentum for peace would have been maintained and whether Egypt would have accepted our proposals had we not made such far-reaching and painful concessions....

The price is high, and this would seem to be inevitable, but the question to be asked is what is the maximum we are prepared to pay for peace...? My reply would be: there must not be a third country between the sea and the desert, because for us that is an existential condition. That condition is met by the government's plan. The defense of the Land of Israel from the sea to the River Jordan and the preservation of law and order must always be in the hands of the IDF. That condition, the Prime Minister told us here, will be met.

A. Yadlin (Alignment): What about the historical forces—military control plus demographic increase—what does that lead to?

M. Zorea (Democratic Movement for Change): We are also historical forces. When our security control there is complete we can foil the activities of what you call "historical forces."...

I would like to list the conditions which seem to me to be essential, and without which there can be no peace....It seems to me that a line more or less like the one described by MK Peres, from El Arish to Ras Muhammed, must be defended by the IDF. Weighty security and settlement considerations support this, though this is not the place to give them. Unfortunately, this condition is not met in the plan before us.

The second condition is that there should be no withdrawal in the Golan Heights, apart from minor adjustments which can be termed "cosmetic." The plan makes no mention of the Golan Heights. I gather that it is the Prime Minister's intention to implement most of the points I have mentioned, and which are essential....

Israel has submitted its plan for peace, in return for which, without any further erosion, we will give Egypt and the Arab countries peace. They need it. If they understand and accept, it will go well with them, but if they do not, let it be said here and now, from this podium, that the Arab countries, led by Egypt, have kept peace away from our region.

We all hope that peace will come on those terms, and we support the government, although not always agreeing with every detail, in its current course towards peace. Thank you.

...

Z. Warhaftig (National Religious Party): Mr. Speaker, my mentors and teachers, one does not offer congratulations until a task is completed, but I offer best wishes on the courage to take the first steps along the long road towards peace. Peace is made and requires long and arduous efforts. I would like to point out that the course the government has suggested taking has achieved important, albeit modest, results.

The first achievement: after thirty years of war with our neighbors, direct, face-to-face negotiations have begun. For years we dreamt about it, asked for it, seeking peace. We tried to convince our neighbors to come to the negotiating table with us. It has been agreed that two committees should be established to negotiate for a peace treaty....That is of great value.

The second achievement is that today Israel has a peace plan, a generous plan. Formulating a plan is also an important achievement, because there is no peace without some sacrifice and compromise. Our sages tell us to love both truth and peace....

I would like to stress five points in the plan presented by the Prime Minister. First of all, with regard to Judea, Samaria and Gaza and self-rule for the Arabs living there. This began beforehand, really. Elections were held for the local authorities. We did not interfere in the internal affairs of towns like Nablus, Tulkarm, etc. If that prevails in this plan for self-rule it will satisfy the Arabs of Judea, Samaria and Gaza to a great extent....

Secondly, the right of Jews to settle in Judea, Samaria and Gaza and for this to be governed by Israel directly rather than by the Administrative Council. Thirdly, the cooperation between Israel, Jordan and the Arabs of the Land of Israel on important issues, a functional condominium, as it were, between Israel, Jordan and the Arabs regarding immigration to Judea, Samaria and Gaza and important legislative matters. Fourthly, the solution of the problem of the refugees in our country and a modest and reasonable contribution to easing the suffering of the Arab refugees in other countries.

The fifth point is that the IDF will remain in charge of internal security in Judea, Samaria and Gaza, otherwise there will be chaos there. We can see what is happening in Lebanon. With central government undermined, the internecine clashes in Lebanon have led to greater loss of life there than in all the wars between Israel and the Arabs in the Middle East. Withdrawing the IDF from these areas would bring disaster on the country.

The third achievement I would like to note is the backing given to Israel's peace plan by the U.S. and Britain. There has been a change of atmosphere in the West in recent months, because we have come up with a comprehensive peace plan which has the backing of friendly countries. That might affect the negotiations with our neighbors.

We must protest against the hostile stance of the U.S.S.R. and its satellite states. Why do they disturb the efforts to attain peace...? If we manage to attain peace with one large neighbor, peace with the other countries will follow. We must also appeal to countries which oppose negotiations to change their position....

I am fully aware that this plan is by no means ideal. It contains many pitfalls and dangers, including the possibility that existing and potential settlements may be affected. I appeal from this podium to my colleagues, the members of Gush Emunim, not to let us down, not to fight against peace, and in that way to help strengthen existing settlements and establish new ones....

The plan also contains a great political danger. It is obvious that self-rule has a tendency towards self-government, and then to irredentism. It is evident that we must be aware of that and the struggles which it could entail. There may be pressure for change and for compromises which do not tend towards a functional division, when the time comes. We know that it is not in our power today to bring all our neighbors to the negotiation table. Why should we not make every effort to make peace with whoever is prepared to do so? Perhaps with time the other neighbors will become more amenable and it will be possible to make peace with them.

I hope that the nation and its representatives will focus on the existing efforts of the government of Israel and give it the power and strength to attain peace, and may God bless his people with peace.

...

M. Wilner (Democratic Front for Peace and Equality): Madam Speaker, Knesset Members, we are currently discussing a question which is fateful for the nation, the entire region and to some extent world peace too. The recent past has proved once more that the nation in Israel wants peace, the nation in Egypt wants peace and that the Arab peoples and all the nations of the world want peace in the Middle East. We think that peace is the supreme interest of the nation in Israel, and that everything should be done to attain it and put an end to bloodshed once and for all....

The question before the Knesset is: does the government's plan further peace or not? Does it or does it not embody a solution for the Israel-Arab conflict and the Palestinian problem? In our opinion, the government's plan does not solve the Israel-Arab conflict or bring peace nearer, and may well lead to the failure of the efforts to bring peace to the Middle East. The problem is not solely in the details of the plan; the problem is more fundamental: are we, the Knesset of Israel, cognizant of the basic fact that two nations—the Israelis and the Palestinian Arabs—live in this country?

On the basis of its right to self-determination, the Jewish people established its state, the State of Israel, and I am proud to have been one

of the signatories of its Declaration of Independence. That document states, amongst other things, that we established the state on the basis of the Security Council resolution of 29 November 1947, which determined that two countries—one Jewish, the other Arab—should come into being in this country. Thus, the issue of a Palestinian state is not something which has to be decided again in the international arena. It is not a right which needs to be recognized once more....Anyone who denies Israel's right to exist is against peace, even though he speaks of peace, and by the same token, anyone who denies the Palestinians' right to a state of their own alongside Israel is against peace even though he speaks of peace day and night.

The term "rejection front" refers to all those extremists in the Arab world who are not prepared to acknowledge the State of Israel's right to sovereign existence, and we oppose them....The rejection front in Israel applies to all those forces which deny the natural right of the Palestinian people to establish its own state in the West Bank, the Gaza Strip and the Arab part of Jerusalem. Without mutual recognition there can be no solution. Unless the Arab countries and the Palestinian Arab nation and the PLO representatives recognize Israel's right to sovereign existence within the borders of June 4 there will be no peace, and similarly, without withdrawal from the territories occupied in 1967 and the determination of the borders of June 4 as the peace borders, the establishment of a Palestinian state and the signing of peace treaties, there will be no peace....

What the Prime Minister has proposed is not a just plan for everyone, it does not involve mutual recognition of rights and is not a peace plan....It proposes, in effect, that the Arab nations and the Palestinians should agree to abandon the very existence of the Palestinians. How can one even make such a proposal, which involves negating a nation's existence and perpetuating Israel's occupation of the territories?

The plan known as "autonomy," or "self-rule," proposes that the inhabitants of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip—not the Palestinians, which nation is not recognized—should manage their own medical funds, sewage arrangements, transportation, education, welfare, etc.... This means that it denies their elementary right to self-determination and an independent state. What it amounts to is a proposal to establish an Israeli colony with the approval of the Arab nations and the international community. Obviously, such a thing is impossible. No facade using the word "peace" can conceal the fact that this plan bears within it the seeds of a fresh war in the Middle East, one which we must prevent, for the sake of our children and the children of the Arab nations.

The Prime Minister spoke frankly. He said that sovereignty over the West Bank and the Gaza Strip is ours. And that we have the right, it is our country, it belongs to us. But since there is no agreement to that he proposes that the question of sovereignty should be left unresolved for the

moment. In other words, he is proposing that sovereignty should remain *de facto* in Israel's hands, with our military rule, our control of security and foreign policy, and the administration of secondary local issues by a tripartite committee where each side will have a veto. This means that the government of Israel will have the veto even as regards sewage in Nablus....Thus, the entire proposal is a pretense disguised as a so-called peace plan.

We are for peace...but peace can come only on the basis of respect for the rights of the two major parties to the conflict, the Israelis and the Palestinians. There is no point discussing other plans because anyone may choose citizenship in the West Bank. Will anyone choose to be an Israeli citizen under Israel's Citizenship Law when even thousands of Israeli Arabs born in Israel do not have citizenship because this has to be granted approval? The talk of mutual settlement and purchase of land cannot be serious when even an Israeli Arab cannot rent an apartment in Carmiel, inside Israel. And if we retain military control of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, will Arabs from there be permitted to buy land in Israel? Or is the intention to make use of another fifteen years to transfer the maximum number of settlers to the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, determine *faits accomplis* and turn Israeli sovereignty from being *de facto* into being *de jure*...?

We must not rely on the fact that we have a little more American arms, and everything depends on strength. The Prime Minister bases his claim on Israel's right, not its strength....The balance of power in the Middle East can change over the years, as has happened in the course of history....Will we allow someone with more power than us to conquer Israel and deprive us of our sovereignty...? We will not. Why do you fail to understand that the same applies to the Palestinians...?

In 1973 the Foreign Minister said that he preferred to retain Sharm el-Sheikh and do without peace, than to have peace and lose Sharm el-Sheikh....We said in the Knesset that what he and the government were saying would lead to war. And war came, to our regret. Today we say that you are not fooling anyone, except yourselves. You are being unrealistic. You are detached from the reality of the Middle East and the world. We appeal to you to rethink your position, not to hide your negative attitude and your opposition to the existence of the other nation in this country, but to be wise and realistic.

S.J. Gross (Aguda): You want an Arafat state, that's clear. An Arafat state will save the Middle East...!

M. Wilner (Democratic Front for Peace and Equality): The Palestinians, like Israel, must have their rights...and when the time comes they will elect their own representatives, as is their right....It is not for Israel to say who will represent the Palestinians....I conclude by saying that peace is Israel's highest interest...but it can only come on the basis

of justice for all, and above all for the two nations in this country—the Israelis and the Palestinians.

...
Arieh Eliav (Sheli): Mr. Speaker, distinguished Knesset Members, Sadat's descent on the Knesset, the government and the nation has scrambled the practical and political thought systems of us all. Each and everyone of us has to stop and take stock....Those who claimed in the past that there was no one to talk to have to admit that now there is. Those who contended that there was no Palestinian problem must now take its centrality into account. Those who said that there could be no peace between us and the Arabs, or only in the distant future, must now retract and concede that it is within our grasp.

There is nothing wrong in changing one's mind in view of new circumstances. On the contrary, stubborn conservatism, insisting on the status quo, obtuseness and lack of imagination are what brought the previous government to its wretched policy of inaction and blindness.

The Prime Minister has presented a new plan and policy...which, although it is not mine and my party's, contains bold, new elements.... We will be the last to criticize and the first to praise any step, however small and inadequate, on the long and difficult road to peace.

There are those who castigate the government and the Prime Minister for abandoning the principles on the basis of which they were elected....The main complaints come from the religious camp, to which I would like to address a few words. Jewish religion and philosophy has placed truth at the pinnacle of its values....The only thing higher than truth for Jews is peace....For peace, according to Judaism, it is even permissible to lie, both in the minor matters between husband and wife and one human being and another, and in the major issues of peace within Judaism and between the Jewish people and the rest of the world....

I believe that when the Prime Minister coined new political expressions regarding the Palestinians and their right to self-rule, free elections and the cancellation of military rule in the territories, he did that for the sake of peace, in the best tradition of Judaism....Despite the fact that the Prime Minister has made some important changes for the better on the path to peace, that path is not ours, and although we will never do anything to obstruct any move which could bring peace nearer, we have serious reservations about the plan.

I have no intention of stressing once more the centrality of the Palestinian problem....I think that by now both the Prime Minister and this House know that without proposing a solution for that problem there can be no peace between us and the Arabs....Such solutions can and must be found....The Prime Minister proposes giving the Palestinians autonomy, and we claim that they must be granted the elementary right to self-determination....By doing that we will be fulfilling the highest

ideals of Zionism without ruling another nation. The Zionist Jewish national movement demanded the right to self-determination and obtained it after a struggle and suffering. It implemented that definition in the Declaration of Independence and proclaimed its existence as the State of Israel.

There will be no peace until the Palestinian national movement receives that right in the areas occupied by Israel since the Six Day War and which contain more than a million Palestinian Arabs. There is no argument as to our historic right to the entire Land of Israel, but we must not deprive those for whom it is also the heritage of their forefathers of that right. The Palestinian Arabs of the territories should decide their fate, whether they wish to establish an independent state or a federation or confederation with Jordan, or any other course. All that is provided the entire leadership of the Palestinians recognizes Israel and announces its intention of living in peace alongside it, and provided maximum security precautions are included in any peace arrangement with them, including demilitarization with supervision, guarantees and stages for implementing peace agreements with them.

The security arrangements—which must be rigorous and thorough—will not contradict the right to self-determination which will include sovereign territory, a flag and a national anthem, a parliament, passports, currency and ambassadors. Such things have happened in the past, and temporary restrictions regarding security areas have been imposed on newly-independent nations, gradually being removed with the passage of time and the dynamic of peace. That is what happened with Austria and Japan, and that can be the case with the Palestinian Arabs. In our opinion, only by separating ourselves politically from the territories can we attain agreement and cooperation with the Palestinians....

The Palestinians living in the territories and the Palestinian diaspora will accept nothing less than the right to self-determination. I am sure that many of them are aware of and agree to temporary security restrictions and that on that basis it is possible to oblige them to find leaders among them, but on the basis of the administrative autonomy proposed by the government they will not agree to sit down with us and discuss peace.

If we are indeed embarking on the beginning of the long and difficult road to peace, we will have to make a supreme effort to mobilize all our spiritual, physical and mental strength. I am convinced that no one among us will oppose it, and we must all share the burden of attaining peace after the bloody war between us and the Arabs which has continued over five generations....

We must begin setting up a team of people who will devote all their time to thinking deeply and imaginatively and devising ways of cooperation and joint development between us and the Arabs. Israel must

begin to prepare planning and implementing frameworks for tackling the regional rehabilitation of the Palestinian refugees. Israel must also prepare plans for cooperation with Egypt in such spheres as water, agriculture, food technology and, primarily, regional development in desert areas, as well as industry and tourism, which offer unlimited possibilities once there is peace. Israel must also indicate ways of cooperation in the areas of health, education, science and culture between Israel and the Arab nations. Here, too, there can be tremendous crossfertilization between the two civilizations which could benefit millions of people in the developing world around us....All these subjects, and many others which will develop in the course of making peace, require the maximum concentration and coordination of mental and physical abilities in Israel and the Jewish people, so that we can offer wonderful plans, prospects and challenges to our Arab partners and our friends in the world.

Finally, I call on all the moderate Arab leaders with whom we have met, including Palestinian Arabs, not to miss the boat of peace and to board it before it is too late....We appeal to the government of Israel not to relax its endeavors for peace for a moment, for the sake of the nation in Israel, Zionism and the Jewish people, and to go towards it wholeheartedly and with the best of its abilities.

...

S. Aloni (Citizens' Rights Movement): Mr. Speaker, distinguished Knesset, I would like to begin by objecting to the fact that the government's plan was not brought before us in writing, and by thanking the Prime Minister for permitting me to study his personal copy....

(From the floor: They are afraid of leaks.)

Possibly. There is no doubt that today, despite the differences of opinion in the past and at present, the Prime Minister is to be congratulated for several things....The first is his intuitive feeling, perhaps deriving from his adherence to the teachings of his mentor, Jabotinsky, that the historic moment for embarking on negotiations has arrived and that the iron wall has been completed, to use Jabotinsky's expression. We are the majority here, and consequently it is time to conduct negotiations with our neighbors and break through to peace.

The second thing for which he is to be congratulated is his courage in doing something, not merely recognizing the need for it. Those of the Prime Minister's colleagues who claim that he has deviated from his principles are wrong. The main weakness of the plan brought before us is in the Prime Minister's adherence to the teachings of Jabotinsky. Anyone who reads Jabotinsky's articles written in 1928 and 1933 will see how loyal the Prime Minister has been to the idea of: "The land of Israel is the land of the Jewish people, but another nation lives there."...

If I had the time I could read out many more such quotes...but the essence is that once we are a majority in our land we can conduct nego-

tiations with the Arabs and recognize their rights, and that the Arabs will accept us only if we are strong and a majority "because they are not a rabble but a living nation, which will make concessions only when there is no other way of solving the problem and there is no opening in the iron wall, and extremist groups which deny our rights will lose their influence to more moderate elements, with whom it will be possible to establish guarantees and relations of good-neighborliness."...

What Jabotinsky was talking about was not granting national rights as the Arabs express them and as we have attained, but enabling them to obtain education, culture and the autonomy the Prime Minister has proposed and which it is doubtful whether the Arabs will accept....Because it is impossible today to annex territory, the Prime Minister has in effect turned the wheel back to the situation which prevailed in 1947, when there were Arabs in Palestine, the historic home of the Jewish people, and the problem of the nation had to be solved....That is the rationale for according them autonomy. The danger of doing this is that we may find ourselves going towards a country along the lines of South Africa, where a certain kind of autonomy was prepared for the blacks and developed into a third country. I am not a proponent of a third country or of any annexation which will lead to a binational state, with all that that implies. I do not think that there is a majority in Israel or among the Palestinians today which wants a binational state....But there is hope, and the plan states that after five years the subject will be reviewed. But because of the return to the Greater Land of Israel, the Prime Minister has, in my view, been too hasty in relinquishing territory which was not part of Palestine, promising to return the Sinai, the Rafah area, Sharm el-Sheikh, etc. to Egypt already at this stage.

Let us remember that this international border is by no means sacred, and has existed since the First World War....Let us remember that the Sinai is a white stain on the map, and that passport control to Egypt was at Kantara, not Rafah. If we remember those things it is not clear why we are leaving what has been defined as a basic defense need, whether it is Sharm el-Sheikh or the settlements of the Rafah area....I would like to hear from the Prime Minister whether they will be offset by anything else in an agreement with Egypt....

And so, with all the breakthrough and the dynamic we and the world and the neighboring countries have entered, I have serious apprehensions that we are going towards an interim agreement in which we will give Egypt everything which is not Palestine, after which it will agree to some general formula which will allow Sadat to get out of his promise to the Palestinians gracefully, and we will remain saddled with the problem, in the forefront of the public eye, with Palestinian rejection of autonomy and with an increased conflict....Syria will follow Egypt's example and obtain the Golan Heights, while the central problem will still remain unresolved....

The problem is not merely that of the Palestinians, but of our way of life, whether we want a binational state or development towards a Palestinian state, or a third possibility which I think none of us desire—rule over another nation, as is the situation in South Africa. We must foresee that eventuality before embarking on our grand closing sale of everything for some kind of arrangement, whether with the Egyptians or in the Golan Heights, and it is important that the Prime Minister clarify the situation for us on those scores.

Political Situation and Reply to Sadat's Speech

Introduction

Early in January 1978, President Carter, en route from the Far East, met with Sadat at Aswan in Upper Egypt. They devised a formula relating to a solution of the Palestinian problem in all its aspects, the granting of the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people, including participation in the determination of their future. On 15 January 1978 the Egyptian weekly *October* published an interview with Sadat including a sharp personal attack on Begin.

Three days later the Political Committee convened in Jerusalem; the Egyptian delegation was recalled to Cairo within a day of its arrival, using remarks made by Begin in the course of a dinner speech as a pretext. As a result, the Israel government decided to postpone indefinitely the departure of the Israel delegation to the meeting of the Military Committee scheduled to take place in Cairo. In effect, negotiations had reached an impasse, and a sense of crisis prevailed.

Sitting 71 of the Ninth Knesset

23 January 1978 (15 Shevat 5738)

The Prime Minister, M. Begin: Mr. Speaker, Knesset Members, permit me to congratulate Israel's house of representatives on its twenty-ninth birthday. I am one of the three or four Members sitting here today who remember that day, the inception of Israel's democratic life. We held elections twenty-nine years ago in a time of war and bloodshed....At the founding meeting our hearts were uplifted, because only a few months previously we had emerged from servitude to freedom, raised our flag among those of the nations and proclaimed our independence. On the day of the elections to the Knesset we proclaimed our civil liberty.

I remember that great day. Since then, throughout the period of the Knesset's existence, on the basis of my experience and observation of what is happening throughout the world, it has been one of the most democratic parliaments, with a spirit of amity pervading even the fiercest arguments....It is a democratic parliament in the fullest sense of the term....I wish the Speaker and all the Members of the House that this august body may long continue to debate the issues of the day, reach wise and important decisions and serve as an example of liberty, freedom of speech and mutual respect....