

# Israel hope to alter Carter's position on Palestine

WITH PUBLIC optimism and private despair President Jimmy Carter and his Mid-east experts are preparing for Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin's July 19 arrival.

Reports continue to reach Washington that Begin is confident because once Carter rethinks his positions regarding Israel's West Bank claims and a "Palestinian homeland."

A campaign is under way, in fact, to insist that Carter has never considered anything like an independent Palestinian state, only an area in Jordan. The success of this campaign could defuse the argument for returning nearly the entire occupied West Bank to allow for a Palestinian state and consequently strengthen the argument never to deal with the PLO.

## Homeland

After meeting with Carter on June 15, Israel's Chief Rabbi, Shlomo Goren, insisted the President "definitely, definitely" is not considering a sovereign state for the Palestinians. The White House, though deluged with inquiries, refused to confirm or deny the story, preferring to hide behind the assertion that "the President made no statement . . . other than what he has said publicly."

But the same report about Carter's attitudes toward the Palestinians was made last week after 40 prominent American Jews met with Carter at the White House. The *New York Times* reported in a

## WASHINGTON special to the Saudi Gazette NEWS

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front-page story that "one participant reported . . . Carter . . . said that a future Palestinian homeland had to be tied to Jordan and not be created as an independent state."

If true, this is far closer to the Israeli position than previously thought. Just a few months ago the President clarified his statements with the assertion that a Palestinian "homeland" could be "in association with Jordan or by some other means." — in effect, leaving the door ajar for a real Palestinian state and dealings with the PLO. It should be remembered in this connection that former Prime Minister Rabin reacted to Carter's "homeland" statement by saying: "I'm afraid Carter doesn't have [Jordan] in mind."

And the *Jerusalem Post* editorialized on May 26 that "theoretically, of course, such a homeland could be secured within the territorial limits of the kingdom of Jordan. But every fresh elaboration on the idea by the U.S. President makes it increasingly clear that what is meant is an independent political entity in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, perhaps loosely connected with Jordan."

Whether there has been a change in Presidential thinking as a result of Israeli and American Jewish lobby efforts to whittle away at what they consider a

Both the *Washington Star* (the capital's evening newspaper) and *Time* magazine carried major articles on Saudi Arabia last week.

In a front-page story asking, "What's behind the complex U.S.-Saudi relationship," the *Star's* Henry Bradsher, reporting from Riyadh, noted that in return for Saudi co-operation on oil prices and supplies the U.S. is expected to pressure Israel to withdraw from occupied Arab territories and also to provide Saudi Arabia with a form of protection.

"We hope our friend will remember us if there's trouble in this part of the world and we need them," one Saudi official is quoted as saying. Iraq, the Soviet Union, and Iran are all mentioned as potential aggressors.

In sum, Bradsher reports, "a degree of trust unusual in international relations seems to exist between this proud, spirited, fiercely independent desert people and the American nation . . . an intricate network of largely undefined obligations and expectations has developed."

The *Time* article stressed Saudi Arabia's growing petrodollar reserves (\$2.8 billion as of April, while only \$0.7 billion in 1970). "The Saudis can be expected to wield their petropower prudently," the magazine concluded. In fact, "Saudi Arabia is emerging from decades of isolation to exercise a power influence for stability in the Mid-east, and is becoming the closest and most helpful ally of the U.S. among the Arab nations."

## Silence

Whatever, it is interesting that the President allows Jewish leaders who meet with him to clarify what he means but ordered his own State Department last March 16, the evening he first spoke of a "Palestinian homeland" while in Clinton, Massachusetts, not to clarify or elaborate on this sensitive issue.

## Kingdom in news

Should Begin's discussions prove Carter is firm on his three-point outline for a Mid-east settlement — near-total withdrawal, a Palestinian homeland, and real peace — it is likely Begin will then counter with a plan of his own in an attempt to put the U.S. on the defensive.

## The battle of lobbies

Two weeks ago, the President and representatives of the National Association of Arab Americans (NAAA) met with Secretary of State, Cyrus Vance. And last week the representatives of 30-plus American Jewish organisations met with the Secretary and the President, the Vice-President, National Security Adviser, and members of staff.

One meeting was at the State Department, the other at the White House. One meeting received little attention, the other was front-page news.

Clearly, the powers of the Arab-American lobby and the American Jewish lobby are vastly unequal. Though NAAA had a successful annual conference some months ago in Washington with many hundreds of delegates in attendance, the organisation is not as yet organised for effective lobbying. Still, the new president of NAAA, Joseph Baroddy, stated in an interview: "I hope we are becoming known as the Arab lobby" in Washington.

### Shake-up

"N triple A," as it is known around Washington, is in the midst of an important shake-up. The young executive director for the past year, Michael Saba, is out. Baroddy and members of the board are searching for as many as three new staff people. One of these will likely be responsible for a real lobbying effort on Capitol

Hill — the stronghold for pro-Israeli sentiments. It is likely, in fact, that within a short time NAAA will actually register as a lobbying organisation, something it has not officially been in the past.

Meanwhile, the American Jewish lobby — which Senator James Abourezk of South Dakota recently termed "the most powerful and persuasive foreign influence that exists in American politics" — is continuing to encourage severe criticism of President Carter's approach to the Mideast conflict. The lobby's weekly newsletter is filled with challenges to Carter's views.

And the lobby — sometimes referred to erroneously as "the Israeli lobby" — was intimately involved in the Republican assault on the Senate floor, on June 27, to discredit the President's efforts.

Senator Jacob Javits was the main Senate antagonist. He asserted that "by asking so much of Israel, and thereby requiring Israel as a matter of its very survival, to ask so much from the Arabs in return — things which may exceed Arab willingness to concede — the Carter proposals may in themselves undercut the possibility of a successful U.S. role as mediator." Javits was seconded by Senators Brooke, Packwood, Schweiker, Stone, Case, Sparkman and Domenici.

It was a clear warning to Carter that the Republicans in Congress may be looking for political gain by becoming Israel's champions.