

In official Soviet circles, there is a current that believes the reestablishment of diplomatic relations is presently conditioned by the convening of the Geneva conference. Nevertheless, there are voices that say this would be an excellent precondition, susceptible of facilitating the convocation of the conference.

At the time of the birth of the Hebrew state, the Soviet Union, the first country to recognize the young nation,

looked with sympathy on this young nation with its socialist orientation, which was created against the English. This inclination was all the more strong in that Israel was at that time surrounded by conservative Arab regimes. Today the situation is reversed: Moscow sees Israel as an American platform and declares itself to be the ideological parent of the Arabs. But traces of affection in a disappointed love still remain....

Will Israel Make Breakthrough On Palestinian Arab Question?

The consensus view of informed observers in Jerusalem and in the U.S. is that Israel is readying itself for acceptance of the creation of an independent Palestinian Arab state on the now-occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip territories.

While this possibility seems to have been rejected by Prime Minister Menachem Begin in his Nov. 24 press conference reiterating Israel's refusal to consider talks at Geneva or elsewhere with known members of the Palestine Liberation Organization, the reality is much more complex, involving a delicate interplay of proposals, concessions, and hard bargaining lines from the three primary parties to the negotiating process — Israel, Egypt, and the Palestinian Arabs.

Within Israel, the mood of the population and of much of the Israeli cabinet favors rapid concessions in favor of achieving a viable solution to the Palestinian Arab problem. According to a former correspondent for the leading Israeli daily *Ha'aretz*, "the drift in Israel has shifted after the Sadat visit — from the feeling of anger and intransigence which helped usher Begin into power

in the first place to a more 'leftist' direction in favor of compromise and an overall peace. This drift will undoubtedly affect the cabinet's policy-making decisions."

A government voice in favor of West Bank concessions has been that of Deputy Prime Minister Yigal Yadin, whose entrance into the cabinet last month clearly strengthened Begin's coalition, giving the government the basis for heading off the extreme nationalist right in the event that bold foreign policy moves had to be made.

In a Nov. 22 interview with Radio Jerusalem, Yadin insisted that Israel "shouldn't underestimate the visit" of Sadat. "It was a great visit; we have always talked of direct negotiations, but no one thought it would happen in such a bold, dramatic way, to bring peace with Egypt to be consummated at the Geneva conference." The Israeli public, Yadin continued, "is not satisfied with the usual events in the Mideast."

The next day, Yadin speculated on a possible Israeli West Bank proposal which was, however, not much more than a reiteration of the so-called Allon Plan: the return, for the most part, of the West Bank to Jordan, but with

Israeli Writer Calls Upon Begin To Compromise On Palestinian Issue

Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin is coming under increasing pressure within Israel to make serious concessions on the question of Palestinian self-determination. Here, Jerusalem Post columnist Meir Merhav calls upon Begin to make such concessions in his Post column Nov. 22; Merhav recently authored a New York Times editorial page feature calling upon Israel to consider negotiations with the Palestine Liberation Organization.

President Sadat has demonstrated his will to make a bold break with the past and take a leap into the future. He has invited Israel to join him in the making of history, here and now, although this may, as he took pains to warn repeatedly, call for hard and difficult decisions.

Mr. Begin unfortunately did not rise to the occasion All he had to offer for Sadat's offer of peace was — peace

There is still some hope. Mr. Begin repeated that everything, including the permanent boundaries between Israel and her neighbors, is open to negotiation. And, in language as guarded as possible, he warned our guest against excluding any subject from negotiations

If this is an indication that Mr. Begin may come to recognize that there can be no peace in our area without a solution to the Palestinian problem — a problem that cannot be imposed on them by either Sadat, Assad, Hussein, or Begin, but must be acceptable to *them*; if it means that the way has been opened to territorial compromise; if it means that what has been said in public together with what may have been said in private is enough to induce the other Arab leaders to negotiate in the manner now opened up by President Assad — there is still hope.

Israeli security deployments in the area. This in itself is by no means an adequate solution to the Palestinian question, and has been rejected frequently by Palestinian and other Arab spokesmen. The real substance of Israeli policy considerations, then, is taking place on a more circumspect level.

"Reassessment" in Israel

According to the Paris correspondent for the Hearst newspaper chain's *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*, "a reassessment has begun in Tel Aviv about whether a Palestinian state might be less of a political and military danger to Israel than has been assumed until now." A growing consideration in Tel Aviv, the *Seattle* paper reports, is that a Palestinian "buffer-state" concept is increasingly being seen as preferable to Palestinian Arab incorporation into the state of Jordan, which could only strengthen Jordan's fighting capability in a new war. In that event, "Israel would face not a Palestinian mini-state but a much larger, more dangerous entity, with the counter-balancing, moderate Hussein (the Jordanian monarch — ed.) eliminated." Therefore, "the atmosphere created by Sadat's spectacular move might well induce Begin to listen attentively."

"Far-Reaching Scenario for Peace"

According to the *Soho Weekly News*, a local New York newspaper owned by an American financial supporter of Begin's Likud Party, "Anwar Sadat did not leave (Jerusalem) empty-handed. He merely postponed delivery until the package had been properly wrapped." Basing their information on sources "at the highest level of the Begin government in Jerusalem and Tel Aviv and by U.S. State Department contacts," the newspaper claims that "for the first time, the Israelis have privately modified their unrelenting public opposition to the creation of an autonomous Palestinian state. Begin has indicated to Sadat that he is prepared to negotiate a long-range, step-by-step creation of such a state," the report continues, "with each step linked to guarantees of national security."

Soho Weekly expects a face-to-face Israel-PLO meeting to take place "within a month" and reports that "Sadat refrained from mentioning the PLO" in his Knesset speech "in return for a tacit guarantee from Begin that the Israeli would soften his opposition in principle to a Palestinian state."

"Ready to Cut Our Own Flesh"

The Israel correspondent for France's *Le Nouvel Observateur* magazine, Victor Cygielman, similarly

assesses Begin's readiness for a series of major concessions, including a transcendence of his prior insistence on identifying the West Bank as territories requiring permanent Jewish sovereignty. In return for real peace, Begin will, according to Cygielman, tell Sadat and other Arab leaders, "I am ready to cut our own flesh. I will not return 'Arab' territories to you: I will give up a part of my own country. I will make a sacrifice on the altar of Israeli-Arab reconciliation."

Cygielman insists that Begin wants to ensure for himself a great place "in the history of the Jewish people," and believes this can be done only through making peace, for which "he is ready to go far and give much." Already, Cygielman notes ironically, it is the ultra-nationalist Begin who has accepted concessions, such as acceptance of a Palestinian Arab presence at Geneva, that the former Israeli Labour Party governments refused to accept.

Palestinian Concessions Required First?

Before any substantial Begin concessions are made, the Palestinian Liberation Organization may first have to publicly agree to co-existence with Israel along the lines that Sadat laid out in the Knesset, according to Edward B. Glick, a leading expert on Israeli military-political affairs at Temple University. Now that Israel has recognized the right of Palestinian Arabs to be in Geneva, "the ball is in the PLO's court. It simply can no longer say, 'Israel has no right to live, not even in Tel Aviv.'"

Within Israel, Glick continued, "if Begin is willing and ready," he can "bring the population around to accept a deal with Palestinian representatives who acknowledge publicly that Israel's here to stay." The entrance of Yadin's Democratic Movement for Change group into the government recently, Glick emphasized, has "given Begin the ability to politically pull the maneuver off, since if the hardliners can't stomach a deal with the Palestinians, Begin will still have a majority to do what he wants."

In the context of an overall settlement, Glick concluded, Begin will willingly differentiate between "Jewish right to settle in the West Bank" and "actual Jewish sovereignty over the area."

A similar view was expressed by former Israeli Foreign Minister Abba Eban. According to the *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*, Eban declared last week that Israel's "attitude on the subject of territorial concessions will be determined by the Arab nations' attitude on the subject of peace. The more a frontier is open, the less the lines on the map matter."