

# Congressional Visits To Mideast: New Potentials For Peace?

On Jan. 4, a 15-member congressional delegation led by Rep. Clement Zablocki (D-Wis.), chairman of the House International Relations Committee, arrived in the Middle East for an information-gathering tour which will take the Congressmen to Tunisia, Syria, Egypt, Jordan, Israel, Saudi Arabia, and Iran. Simultaneous with this mission was the arrival in the region of a five-man senatorial delegation attended by Sen. Hollings (D-S.C.), a leading member of the Commerce, Science and Transportation Committee.

In an interview, a spokesman from Congressman Zablocki's office said that the delegation wanted to have a more direct reading of the political, economic, and military issues in the area. Informed sources on Capitol Hill report that "by taking a personal temperature reading of the explosive Mideast, the Congressmen hope to contribute to the overall U.S. policymaking process."

As the recent and dangerous developments surrounding the Egypt-Israeli political committee talks that began in Jerusalem last week have shown, the working out of the "nuts and bolts" of a peace settlement between Israel and the Arab world will be fraught with difficult moments. It is in such moments that the role of the U.S. as mediator and guarantor of a Mideast peace becomes crucial. And a successful U.S. role in the peace process must be defined by the necessity of direct economic assistance in the form of a Mideast economic development program that is the key ingredient of Mideast stability and the only true security guarantee against future wars.

The trailblazing Mideast tour of House Majority leader James Wright (D-Tex.) last November focused on the economic needs of both Israel and Egypt in particular, and a follow-up report is being prepared on future U.S. economic inputs into the Mideast. Politically, Wright acted as a go-between for Egyptian President Anwar Sadat at the time when he was preparing his historic visit to Israel's Knesset (Parliament) in search of peace.

## *PLO Moderation?*

The current congressional tours have potential to carry the peace process still further. In particular, the U.S. congressional delegation will perform a very insightful role in respect to the Administration's view of the Palestine Liberation Organization. What these Congressmen realized was that the PLO is not a gang of crazed terrorists but a political institution that is willing to moderate its position in search of durable peace.

In a three-hour discussion with Rep. Paul Findley (R-Ill.) on Jan. 6, PLO leader Yasser Arafat outlined his organization's willingness to negotiate on the exact timetable of an eventual Palestinian state. What the PLO refuses to compromise is the Palestinian people's inalienable right to their own statehood. Open for negotiation is how long the process toward statehood will take. The Congressmen's willingness to carry this message of PLO moderation back to the White House and

the State Department is reflected in an interview that Rep. Findley granted to the *Jordan Times* (see below).

## *A Number of Avenues*

On the military angle, the House International Relations Committee will review requests from Iran and Saudi Arabia for crucial U.S. aerospace technology. In the case of Iran's request for F-16 jets, commonly known as the "AWACS deal," there has been much controversy within the Administration as to whether the advanced system would fall into enemy (i.e., Russian) hands. Saudi Arabia is also interested in updating its air force through the purchase of American F-15s.

But it is in the political and economic realms that the two U.S. delegations will exercise their important powers. Both Congressman Zablocki and Findley, in particular, emerged as key interlocutors of Arab and Israeli leaders. While both met with Egypt's Sadat and Israel's Begin, the only two Mideast leaders who are involved in direct negotiations, they also met with Syria's Assad, Jordan's Hussein, and PLO chief Arafat, who, in disagreement with Sadat's unilateral gesture of peace toward Israel, have remained outside the negotiating process. Both Assad and Arafat stressed in their conversations with the U.S. lawmakers that any just and durable peace in the Middle East must address the question of self-determination for the Palestinian people and full Israeli withdrawal from the territories occupied during the 1967 war.

The need for cooperation between prodevelopment circles in the U.S. and their European allies is crucial at this time to ensure that further destabilization of the fragile negotiations does not collapse. In the area of economic guarantees, Europe has played an important stabilizing role. Last December, West German Chancellor Helmut Schmidt spent an unprecedented ten days in Egypt, and now West Germany is working on a complete development program for the debt-strapped Egyptian economy. In addition, France has actively pledged its commitment to progress in the region. Two weeks ago, a top-level trio from the French Industry, Economic and Cooperation Ministries toured Saudi Arabia and capped a rich package of economic transaction with a French-Saudi nuclear energy accord. U.S. Congressmen interested in an end to war in the region will be urging their government to use the opportunities created by PLO moderation, and join Europe in building the economic foundations for peace.

## The Congressional Tour

### *Jan. 5: Arafat meets with U.S. Congressmen*

PLO leader Arafat and Clement Zablocki discussed the Mideast situation in Damascus, Syria. During this meeting, which the Jan. 14 *Baltimore Sun* described as a debate between the Palestine Liberation Organization and the U.S. congressional delegation, Arafat proposed

that the United Nations peacekeeping forces be stationed on the border between Israel and a new Palestinian state created as part of an overall Middle East settlement. It was also at this time that Rep. Findley held private discussions with Arafat in order to better acquaint himself with the PLO position.

While visiting Syria, the Congressmen learned that the Palestinian problem is the key to solving the Mideast crisis. The Syrians expressed a friendly attitude toward the U.S. and demanded that the U.S. give its complete support to the peace process.

*Jan. 6: U.S. Congressional delegation arrives in Egypt*

Before leaving for the Sudan, Egyptian President Anwar Sadat met Zablocki's delegation. According to Cairo radio of Jan. 8, Sadat told the U.S. delegation that "Egypt is ready to discuss security facilities for Israel, but not at the expense of land." Sadat urged the Congressmen to stand on the side of peace based on justice. In addition to their meetings with the President, the Congressmen met with the Speaker of the Egyptian Assembly and Prime Minister Mamdouh Salem. As in Damascus, a dialogue took place in which a number of Congressmen sought clarification on all aspects relating to the Mideast dilemma and the Egyptian views.

*Jan. 8: U.S. Senatorial delegation arrives in Saudi Arabia*

Saudi Arabia's number two man, Deputy Prime Minister Fahd, received a U.S. senatorial group led by Senator Harrison Williams (D-N.J.), member of the banking, housing and manpower committees. The delegation reviewed the Mideast crisis in detail with the Saudi leader. According to the *Christian Science Monitor* last week, Sen. Ernest Hollings (D-S.C.) said, "The U.S. cannot afford to let Sadat down... The consequences of failure are unthinkable." Senator Hollings is chairman of the Commerce, Science and Transportation Committee.

Also on Jan. 8, the Egyptian newspaper *Al Goumhouriya* published a statement by Rep. Findley declaring that "The congressmen observed during their meeting in Damascus with Yasser Arafat that he was moderate in his stand and that he had praised President Sadat and had spoken about him in a good spirit." Findley noted in the interview that he detected a "spirit of moderation in Carter's attitude when, in his recent Aswan statement with Sadat, he mentioned the Palestinians' right to determine their own future."

*Jan. 13: Rep. Findley arrives in South Yemen*

Findley, the first U.S. policymaker ever to be invited by the Marxist regime of South Yemen, traveled there to acquaint himself with the country's officials. In a conversation with Rep. Findley's office, it was learned that the South Yemenese, at Saudi urging, are very interested in acquiring U.S. technology in order to develop their oil-producing capabilities.

*Jan. 15: U.S. congressional delegation arrives in Israel*

Upon arrival at Ben Gurion airport for a three-day

visit, Rep. Zablocki declared that the group sensed a "feeling of apprehension in the area." Zablocki stressed that Israel must respond to Sadat's initiative to keep the peace momentum going and added that the Arab leaders whom he had met, including Sadat, "believe that Israel's response to Sadat's initiative has been inadequate and disappointing."

Later, Zablocki and his delegation were shocked at the dinner-table tirade against Egyptian Foreign Minister Kamel by Prime Minister Begin. According to the *Washington Post* of Jan. 18, Zablocki was highly critical of Begin's actions.

**Findley: "Arafat Prepared for Concessions"**

*In a Jan. 12 interview with the Jordan Times, excerpted here, Rep. Paul Findley gave his view of the PLO's moderating stance in the interests of peace.*

An American congressman who met for three hours with Palestine Liberation Organization leader Yasser Arafat in Damascus last week says he feels that Mr. Arafat concedes that any Palestinian state established on the West Bank and Gaza may have less-than-total independence in the first years of its existence.

Representative Paul Findley (Republican, Illinois) told the *Jordan Times* in an interview here last night that he draws this conclusion from Mr. Arafat's suggestion to him that the Palestinians would welcome a peace-keeping and security force in a Palestinian state, if that force were composed of troops of the five veto-wielding permanent members of the United Nations Security Council (The United States, the Soviet Union, Great Britain, France, and the People's Republic of China).

Rep. Findley said Mr. Arafat called the peace-keeping suggestion "the skeleton of an idea" about how a Palestinian state could have internationally acceptable security arrangements. He said Mr. Arafat "welcomed the idea of a peace-keeping force for a stated period of time, and he chose those five countries to provide the peace-keeping forces because they could be commanded by the secretary general of the United Nations."

Rep. Findley asked Mr. Arafat if the U.N. peace-keeping force could remain in Palestine for ten years or more, to which the PLO leader replied that such details could be considered if the idea were first accepted in principle.

Mr. Arafat was then asked whether he would accept excluding American and Soviet troops from such a force, to allay Western fears of undue Soviet presence or influence in a Palestinian state, and Mr. Arafat again said that any such suggestions would be considered if the basic idea were accepted.

"He did not reject these suggestions," Rep. Findley said, "which indicates to me that he is in agreement to very substantial limitations on the independence of any new Palestinian state. Mr. Arafat said he welcomed such a United Nations-supervised peace-keeping force, and I think that by doing so he concedes that in the short term a Palestinian state will have less-than-total independence."

Rep. Findley said Mr. Arafat suggested it would take 10 to 15 years to establish "the skeleton of a government

system in a Palestinian state," and added that Mr. Arafat said he "could not see the day when the new Palestinian state would have such military power that it would constitute a threat to, or cause concern on the part of, any of its neighbors."

"His whole objective is obviously peaceful," Rep. Findley said of Mr. Arafat, whom he had met for the first time. "He came through as a moderate, as one who would make concessions and who would be part of the peace process that is now underway, in Geneva or elsewhere."

### Saudis: "Moderate Stance by Arafat"

*This editorial appeared in the official Saudi Arabian newspaper Ukaz on Jan. 14. It stresses the growing conviction among conservative Arabs that the PLO is moderating its position.*

The new attitude of PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat is bound to strengthen the current direct peace negotiations, because an interim acceptance of a Palestinian state within a reasonable context that would be amenable to the coming stage of peace gives the Arab negotiator a stronger position and political leeway in the current negotiations.

This new change in the Palestinian thinking, which Yasser Arafat has clearly expressed, is of a special and new significance, particularly when we know that Arafat made this statement in Damascus. This implicitly means that it enjoys the sympathy of Syria, without which

Arafat would not have been able to make such a statement on the Syrian territory....

Moreover, the change in the Palestinian political thinking in fact stems from the full realization that the continued rejection of all the efforts being exerted by Egypt will harm the national interests of the Palestinian cause, particularly since in all its talks with Israel Egypt insists on the need to reach a total peaceful solution with the Palestinians because real peace in the Middle East is entirely dependent on the Palestinian solution....

We believe that following this Palestinian acceptance the United States must now play a major role in the negotiations with the Israelis to make the Israeli negotiator accept Palestinian participation in these talks, particularly since Arafat has given every guarantee possible against attack from the Palestinian state that will embody the Palestinians.

Therefore, the excuse that allowing the establishment of a Palestinian state neighboring Israel would be a danger to the Israeli existence and entity is no longer valid after the explanation that Arafat has made regarding the stages of creating a Palestinian state and its political aspirations in the Middle East once the state has reached the final stages of its formation in the peaceful atmosphere that will be realized.

Therefore, Israel must clearly understand that the offer made by the Palestinians will not be repeated, and therefore its rejection of such an offer will hamper the achievement of the desired peaceful objectives, whereas its acceptance of such an offer will determine its seriousness regarding the peace it is presently negotiating, the peace on which the future of the area and both the Arabs and Israelis will depend.

## The Crash Of '79:

# Can London Make It A Reality?

A recent best seller, *The Crash of '79*, describes a scenario in which conflict between the two Persian Gulf oil giants, Saudi Arabia and Iran, plunges the Mideast into a limited nuclear war. This suspense thriller is fiction, but an international banking clique seated in London is intent on making the scenario operational. While the plot of the novel, which centers on an international monetary collapse as the motivating force for the Persian Gulf holocaust, may be considered outrageous, it is nevertheless the policy of the conspiracy emanating out of London to bankrupt the dollar and thereby reclaim international financial hegemony.

The author of *The Crash of '79*, Paul Erdman, is known to have consulted with such London allies as Felix Rohatyn, the architect of New York City's Municipal Assistance Corporation, in writing the book. Then only last month, the U.S. Senatorial Committee on Energy and Natural Resources, chaired by Senator Henry Jackson (D-Wash.), printed a report titled "Access to Oil: The United States' Relationships with Saudi Arabia

and Iran," which is shockingly similar to Erdman's thriller.

Fortunately, London does not have the novelist's ability to make all the characters play their assigned roles. The Shah of Iran has made it clear that his government wants no part of the Jackson report script, scathingly calling it a "flight into fancy," and the Saudis are also refusing to play.

### *The Jackson Screenplay*

The Jackson report, like recent coverage in the *Washington Post*, advocates a major U.S. shift in Mideast policy whereby the economically and politically powerful U.S.-Saudi relationship would be replaced by U.S. dependency on Iran and Israel as gendarmes in the region. It is the Saudi-U.S. alliance, fundamentally based on maintaining the value of the troubled U.S. dollar and supplying oil to the U.S., which is the biggest political obstacle to London's economic offensive against the U.S.

Both U.S. Treasury Secretary Michael Blumenthal