Review of the Year

UNITED STATES
OTHER COUNTRIES
Intergroup Relations

POLITICAL COMMENTATORS felt that Americans were moving to the right politically in 1977. There was a good deal of talk about the "New Conservatism," which sought to draw the line somewhere on public spending, and which insisted on a cost-benefit approach to social programs. The "New Conservatism" affirmed the need for equal opportunity for Blacks and women, but strongly opposed quotas. All this, of course, had important implications for intergroup relations.

Race and Ethnicity

BAKKE CASE

There was agreement among legal scholars and intergroup relations specialists that the Bakke case was one of the most important civil-rights issues to come before the United States Supreme Court in this century.

Alan Bakke sued the University of California's Davis Medical School for denying him admission. Bakke argued that he had been discriminated against on grounds of race, since the medical school had accepted minority group students with lower grades. The university did in fact have a special program which applied separate and lower standards to Blacks, and set aside a quota of 16 seats out of 100 for minority students. The California Supreme Court, in September 1976, decided by a six-to-one vote that the special admissions program was in violation of the equal protection clause of the Fourteenth Amendment. The Regents of the University of California appealed to the United States Supreme Court, which heard arguments on the case in October 1977.

Jewish groups, reflecting the Jewish community's fear of quotas and support of the merit system, came out in favor of Bakke. They argued, as a joint press release issued by the American Jewish Committee and American Jewish Congress put it, "that the use of racial quotas as advocated by the University of California would sacrifice the basic principles of racial equality for expediency and short-term advantage . . . and [would be] profoundly damaging to the fabric of the American society."

Black groups and others arguing against Bakke's admission asserted that if he
prevailed, Black gains in college admissions and hiring would be permanently reversed. In a September 9 telegram to President Carter, a coalition of 15 prominent Black leaders urged him to intervene directly in the writing of the Justice Department brief in the case. The telegram warned that any brief taking the side of Bakke would "sabotage Black advances and frustrate minorities who look to your administration for help."

In the months preceding the scheduled hearing of arguments before the Supreme Court, expressions of concern by pro- and anti-Bakke forces grew in intensity. Supreme Court officials noted that the Bakke case generated more legal briefs from interested parties than any other case argued before the high court in more than 20 years. In total, 58 amicus briefs were filed on behalf of 162 organizations and individuals, and the United States Government; 41 of the briefs supported the University of California; 16 argued that Bakke's constitutional rights had been violated; the U.S. Government brief, reflecting much internal debate and external pressure, argued that racial factors may be taken into account in attempting to compensate for the effect of previous discrimination, but evaded the question of the constitutionality of quotas per se.

The Bakke case created a strange tangle of alliances. Pro-Bakke briefs were filed by, among others, the American Jewish Committee, the Sons of Italy, and the Polish American Affairs Council. Among those opposing Bakke were the Japanese American Citizens League, various Black organizations, and the American Civil Liberties Union. The "liberal" American Federation of Teachers and the "conservative" Young Americans for Freedom supported Bakke. The "liberal" National Association for the Advancement of Colored People and the "conservative" American Bar Association sided with the University of California.

In a column appearing in the Black-oriented Amsterdam News, Clayton Jones, a New York lawyer, attacked the Jewish community for supporting Bakke. "Organized Jewry," Jones wrote, "has taken the position that affirmative action to remove the vestiges of 400 years of white racism is acceptable, but that preferential treatment to achieve a specific goal is somehow un-American." Pointing to the creation of the State of Israel, Jones argued that Jews were in fact "the greatest beneficiaries of preferential treatment in the history of mankind."

Not all Black leaders shared the view of those who argued that the future of Blacks in America depended on the results of the Bakke decision. Civil-rights activist Bayard Rustin saw this claim as "greatly exaggerated." Rustin insisted that the issue was not affirmative action, but quotas. "Most affirmative action programs," he maintained, "do not rely on rigid numerical quotas, and this has not prevented them from helping to place thousands of Blacks in jobs and college programs."

Taking cognizance of the developing polarization over the Bakke case, he warned Blacks that by overestimating the significance of the case, they were "setting up a situation which will encourage people to lash back at those such as Jewish groups and some labor unions who oppose the civil rights position on this issue, but who may be solid allies in the struggle for economic change."
It seemed inevitable that the Bakke case, whatever its ultimate outcome, would leave a residue of bitterness. Writing in the Nation, Paul Delaney stressed that Blacks and other minorities saw the case as proving “that white liberals were unreliable as allies.” Naomi Levine, executive director of the American Jewish Congress, observed that “the civil rights movement has been torn over the issue of quotas.” Hoping to stave off a crisis in race relations, the 79 organizations belonging to the Leadership Conference on Civil Rights pledged to “work together in the future as we have in the past to secure civil rights for all our citizens.”

AFFIRMATIVE ACTION

The debate and controversy surrounding the Bakke case heightened public consciousness of the Government’s commitment to affirmative action. Quite often, however, the discussion was marred by a blurring of the distinction between affirmative action and quotas. Major Jewish organizations made strenuous efforts to explain the difference between the two, stressing that they favored affirmative action but opposed racial and ethnic quotas as a means of compensating for past discrimination against minorities.

The Government’s commitment to affirmative action was enunciated by Vice-President Walter Mondale, who pledged that the Carter Administration would “not turn its back on 200 years of discrimination against minority groups in this land. We think [affirmative action] is an essential and positive tool to overcome past denial.” Despite the Government’s position, poll data compiled by the Gallup organization indicated that the overwhelming majority of Americans regarded affirmative action as nothing more than reverse discrimination, and were opposed to it. A Gallup poll revealed that eight out of ten people believed that ability, as determined by examination, should be the main criterion in selecting students for college admission. Seymour Lipset and William Schneider, in reviewing 30 years of poll data on the subject, concluded that the majority of Americans rejected the concept of preferential treatment in hiring or university admissions. They noted, however, that most Americans, while insisting on strict adherence to merit standards, were willing to accept programs that helped disadvantaged groups to meet those standards.

Where government programs were viewed as de facto quotas or reverse discrimination, Americans, in increasing numbers, took to the courts to prevent their implementation. Thus, the Association of General Contractors, a national trade association of construction companies, sought in October 1977 an injunction against a government requirement that ten per cent of a $4-billion public works project be given to minority contractors. A number of white male applicants for university teaching positions legally contested affirmative action programs which favored women and minorities. Steelworkers in Louisiana, firemen in Pittsburgh, and teachers in Detroit filed suits on similar grounds.
Taking cognizance of the growing number of lawsuits challenging affirmative action programs, the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) released a proposed set of guidelines designed to protect companies from lawsuits charging reverse discrimination. The guidelines, applicable to both private and governmental employers, advised that “the remedial and/or affirmative action programs may be race, color, sex, and ethnic conscious and may include goals and timetables, ratios, and other numerical remedies.” The American Jewish Committee, the American Jewish Congress and the Anti-Defamation League of B’nai B’rith urged the EEOC to revise the guidelines, claiming that they “encouraged employers to hire and promote preferentially,” and failed “to prohibit the hiring or promotion of persons less qualified over those better qualified for reasons of race, ethnicity, or sex.”

BLACKS

Roger Wilkins, a prominent Black spokesman, writing at the end of 1977, stated that the “mood of informed segments of Black America is grim this Christmas season.” Citing a recent discussion among Black journalists, he reported that they were “uniformly gloomy about racial developments in 1977, and pessimistic about prospects for 1978 because of the high rate of Black unemployment both among adults and particularly among Black teenagers, and the lack of response to Black concerns by the Carter Administration.” Herbert Hill, former national labor director for the NAACP, was even more grim. Speaking in Washington, D.C. on December 5, Hill asserted that a “counterrevolution against the civil rights of Blacks” was under way, and warned of an impending “explosion in the ghettos.”

U.S. News & World Report, citing figures released by the United States Department of Labor, noted that the gap between Black and white unemployment rates had widened in 1977; the unemployment rate for whites was 6.1 per cent, while that for Blacks was 15 per cent. Unemployment among Black teenagers was a staggering 40 per cent. On the other hand, data revealed that the proportion of Black families with income over $15,000 had increased twice as fast as that of whites. The U.S. Civil Service Commission reported that the number of Blacks and other minorities in high-paying Federal jobs was increasing rapidly. Minorities now constituted 7.1 per cent of the top civil servants, in contrast to 5.5 per cent in 1973.

The Carnegie Council on Policy Studies in Higher Education and the National Association of State, University, and Land Grant Colleges, reported in October that the percentage of Blacks enrolled in the nation’s colleges, universities, and professional schools continued to rise. It was noted that 41 per cent of those Blacks who sought entrance to medical schools were admitted, as against 37 per cent of whites.

School desegregation problems persisted in the larger cities of the North. A study by Diane Ravitch, a Columbia University historian, revealed that minority group children outnumbered whites in all but eight of the country’s largest cities, and that the trend was continuing. In New York City, public schools were 67 per cent
non-white; in Chicago, 70 per cent; in Detroit, 81 per cent; and in Washington, D.C., 96 per cent. William L. Taylor, director of the Center for National Policy Review, observed that "we are getting into the problem of whole school districts that are racially isolated."

Given the overwhelming support which Blacks gave Jimmy Carter in the 1976 elections, Black leaders assumed that they would have ready access to the White House. More importantly, they anticipated that the new president would be responsive to their political agenda. Yet, while the doors of the White House were open to them, Black leaders were disappointed by what they perceived as a lack of tangible results. The Congressional Black Caucus complained that no Black other than UN Ambassador Andrew Young was close to President Carter; that the President was unenthusiastic about their number one legislative priority, the Humphrey-Hawkins Full Employment Bill; and that Carter had little or no interest in such matters as welfare reform, tax revision, and national health insurance. Vernon Jordan, executive director of the Urban League, sharply criticized the President. In a July 21 press interview, Jordan declared: "We expected Mr. Carter to be working as hard to meet the needs of minorities and the poor as he did to get our vote. But so far, we have been disappointed."

Blacks continued to place heavy emphasis on electoral politics, and with increasing success. For the first time in 75 years, a Black, John D. Bryant, was elected to Boston's School Committee. Bryant's victory was particularly impressive given the bitter struggle that had taken place in Boston over court-ordered bussing. According to data compiled by the Washington-based Joint Center for Political Studies, Blacks registered other impressive political gains. The Center reported that there were 4,311 Black elected officials nationwide, including 295 in Mississippi, 281 in Illinois, 276 in Louisiana, 235 in Michigan, 225 in Georgia, 221 in North Carolina, 218 in Arkansas, and 201 in Alabama. There were four Black elected state officials, and 163 Black mayors. In the past decade, there had been an 81-per-cent increase in Black state senators and a 74-per-cent increase in Black state representatives.

While the Bakke case led to strains in Black-Jewish relations, there were positive developments as well. The Black Americans to Support Israel Committee (BASIC), under the leadership of Bayard Rustin, played an important role in informing the Black community about developments in Israel. The Chicago Daily Defender, a leading Black newspaper, praised Israel for her relations with Black Africa.

In Chicago, a group of prominent Jews and Blacks, led by Rabbi Robert J. Marx and the Reverend Jesse Jackson, met in August to form an organization which would address itself to the concerns of both communities. The Chicago chapter of the American Jewish Committee sponsored a law career seminar at Malcolm X College for 80 minority students. The presidents of the American Jewish Committee and the American Jewish Congress publicly urged increased efforts at the junior and senior high school level to help Blacks prepare for medical and other professional careers.
ALIENS

The problem of illegal aliens entering and remaining in the United States continued to be a divisive issue on the American scene. While estimates varied, the Immigration and Naturalization Service of the Justice Department estimated the number of illegal aliens in the country at six to eight million.

Organized labor opposed the influx of illegal aliens, as the latter were a source of cheap labor. For the very same reason, agricultural interests looked with favor on the aliens. State Department officials were fearful that stringent measures to halt the flow of aliens would worsen relations with Mexico and other Latin American countries. Various religious groups demanded amnesty for those aliens already residing in the United States. Bishop Rene Gracida, chairman of the Catholic Bishops Committee on Migration, asserted that the influx of aliens had "prompted a series of repressive measures," including "raids" on Hispanic communities. Other active opponents of restrictions on aliens were the Christian Community Service Agency in Miami, the National Council of Churches, and the Episcopal Church's National Commission on Hispanic Affairs.

President Carter sent his proposals on how to deal with the problem of illegal aliens to Congress on August 4. The proposals contained three major legislative ingredients: the use of injunctions and civil fines against employers who knowingly hired illegal aliens; intensified border patrols; and an adjustment in the status of those illegal aliens living in the United States, so that they might stay here. As the Congressional Quarterly noted, President Carter "took the middle ground on the controversial issue of employer sanctions and opted for an interim solution to the wrenching problem of those illegal aliens who already have established some degree of 'equity' in U.S. society." The Administration's recommendations failed to produce any legislation in the first session of the 95th Congress.

WOMEN

Ten years after the Women's Movement first emerged, feminist Betty Friedan observed that its impact was felt "everywhere—in sports, churches, offices and homes." Isabel Sawhill, director of the National Commission for Manpower Policy, stated that in 1977, women had much higher aspirations and were experiencing upward mobility.

The National Women's Conference, held in November, was a major event. The Conference, an outgrowth of International Women's Year, was sponsored by the United Nations and financed by a $5 million Congressional appropriation. More than 2,000 women gathered in Houston, Texas to assess the status of women and make recommendations to the President and the Congress "for the elimination of barriers that still prevent women's full participation in all areas and aspects of American life." Prior to the Conference, a 45-member National Commission, appointed by President Carter, considered some 100 proposals, with the aim of
formulating a national plan of action. At the Conference itself, delegates voiced
approval of, among other things, the Equal Rights Amendment; abortion on de-
mand; federal and state funding for poor women seeking abortions; a national health
insurance plan with special provisions for women; Social Security payments for
housewives; the banning of employment, housing, and credit card discrimination
against lesbians; federal and state funding for victims of child abuse; and funds for
programs in rape prevention. By far, the most controversial resolutions were those
relating to abortion and lesbianism. The only resolution that failed to pass was one
calling for the establishment of a federal Women's Department to be headed by a
Cabinet officer.

The prospect of legislative enactment of the Women's Agenda that emerged from
the Conference was by no means certain. A coalition of political and religious
conservatives, which sponsored a counter rally at Houston at the same time that the
National Women's Conference was held, vowed to do everything in its power to
prevent its adoption. Agudath Israel of America, an Orthodox Jewish group, called
upon the Government to stop financing "feminist goals," and condemned the Hous-
ton conference for "adopting a broad range of resolutions which are contrary to the
accepted moral values of our society."

The proposed Equal Rights Amendment to the Constitution, which passed both
houses of the Congress by wide margins in 1972, appeared to be running into
considerable difficulty. A resolution accompanying the amendment had set a seven-
year deadline (March 22, 1979) for ratification by three-fourths of the states. At the
end of 1977, 35 state legislatures, three short of the 38 required for enactment, had
approved the amendment. To the consternation of ERA supporters, the momentum
for enactment seemed to be dissipating. Fearing that ratification in three more states
would not be achieved by the mandated deadline, supporters of the amendment
sought a resolution by the Congress extending the deadline to 1986. Legal scholars
hotly debated whether or not the Congress had the right to extend the date for
ratification, and whether the extension would require a simple majority vote or a
two-thirds vote by the House and Senate.

Religion

CATHOLIC-JEWISH RELATIONS

Despite differences over issues such as abortion and aid to public schools,
Catholic-Jewish relations continued to be harmonious. Typifying the spirit of
understanding between the two faiths was the offering of prayers in all Catholic
churches in the Los Angeles diocese during the Jewish High Holy Day period.
New York City's St. Patrick's Cathedral and Temple Emanu-El broke new
ground when they exchanged senior clergymen; the clergy of St. Patrick's deliv-
ered five lectures on the "Essence of Catholicism" at the adult education classes

The American Catholic Bishops' Committee on the Liturgy recommended that the "Reproaches," a hymn offensive to Jews, be omitted from the Good Friday ritual. Rabbi Marc Tanenbaum, director of the Interreligious Affairs Department of the American Jewish Committee, in a letter to Archbishop John R. Quinn, stated that the recommendation constituted "a significant act of spiritual liberation whose fruits ultimately will be a weakening of the roots of anti-Judaism and a fostering of mutual respect... between Catholics and Jews." Dr. Eugene Fisher, director of the Secretariat for Catholic-Jewish Relations of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops, noted the significant progress that had been made since the second Vatican Council regarding the way in which Catholic textbooks described Jews and Judaism.

Participants in Catholic-Jewish dialogues did, however, encounter some problems. John Sheerin of the United States Catholic Conference observed that the deicide issue was still a matter of concern for Jews, as was the notion held by many Catholics that Judaism had "lost all reason for existence after Christ established the Church." Jews were also troubled, Sheerin stated, by the "lack of Christian interest in Israel, Catholic silence during Hitler's campaign to exterminate the Jews, and anti-Semitic insinuation in liturgical texts."

PROTESTANT-JEWISH RELATIONS

New ground was broken in Protestant-Jewish relations when officials of the Southern Baptist Convention held a three-day dialogue with Jewish religious and communal leaders at Southern Methodist University. The 900,000-member Southern Presbyterian Church adopted a revised "Book of Confessions," which included a statement reflecting increased sensitivity to Jews, Judaism, and the Jewish background of Christianity. In a public statement, the Southern Presbyterian leadership declared: "We Christians have rejected Jews throughout our history with shameful prejudice and cruelty. God calls us to dialogue and cooperation that do not ignore our real disagreement yet proceed in mutual respect and love."

There were, however, some discordant notes in Protestant-Jewish relations. The Anti-Defamation League accused the National Council of Churches (NCC) of "pronounced anti-Israel prejudice" and "insensitivity" to Jewish concerns. The charges were vigorously denied by Dr. William L. Weiler, executive director of the NCC's Office on Christian-Jewish relations. Weiler asserted that a 1974 resolution adopted by the NCC Executive Committee simultaneously affirmed "the right of Israel to exist as a free nation within secure borders," and "the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination and a national entity."
EVANGELICALS

An estimated 45.5 million churchgoers loosely described as “Evangelicals” continued to be an important force on the religious scene. Rice University sociologist William Martin observed that “the Evangelicals have become the most active and vital aspect of American religion today.” The Evangelical movement, which cut across denominational lines and included both Fundamentalists and Pentecostalists, stressed the need for a conscious personal commitment to Christ, and affirmed the authority of the Bible in all matters. The Evangelicals used every means at their disposal, including television and radio programs, Congressional prayer meetings, and testimonials by prominent athletes, to get their message across to the public.

Encouraged by success on the American scene, a group of business, professional, and political figures announced a worldwide Evangelical campaign. William Bright, a key figure in the endeavor, had been the head of the Campus Crusade for Christ for several years, and had been involved in 1976 in a well-publicized political endeavor to elect “born-again” Christians to public office. Bright’s role in the Evangelical campaign gave rise to fears by some that he and other ultra-conservative Evangelicals were attempting to “Christianize” America.

There were increasing signs of an ecumenical link between the Evangelicals and the American Jewish community. Billy Graham, one of the most influential Evangelicals in the United States, addressed the American Jewish Committee’s National Executive Council meeting in Atlanta, on October 30, and affirmed his support for the State of Israel, which he regarded as a fulfillment of Biblical prophecy. Support for Israel was also expressed in an advertisement which appeared in the New York Times and the Washington Post on November 1. The advertisement, signed by 15 individuals prominent in the Evangelical movement, affirmed the right of Israel to exist as a free and independent nation, and expressed concern over the “erosion of American Government support for Israel.”

CHRISTIAN YELLOW PAGES

The Christian Yellow Pages and the Christian Business Directory aroused significant controversy. Both directories solicited and accepted advertising only from people willing to sign an oath that they were “born-again” Christians. Early in 1977, the Anti-Defamation League reported that the Christian Yellow Pages and Christian Business Directory had appeared in 19 cities. By September, the directories were circulating in 57 cities.

As the Christian Yellow Pages and Christian Business Directory came into wider circulation, criticism of them mounted. The official newspaper of the Archdiocese of San Francisco asserted that the directories were “encouraging rank discrimination, not only against Jews and other non-Christians, but also Catholics and some Protestant denominations which do not accept the ‘born again’ concept of relationship with Christ.” The Southern Presbyterian Church called upon its membership
to ignore the directories, asserting that they were "divisive among Christians" and "discriminatory in relation to the Jewish community." In August, units of the Anti-Defamation League in San Francisco, Los Angeles, and San Diego filed suit against the Christian Yellow Pages and the Christian Business Directory on the grounds that they violated several California statutes dealing with unfair business competition and religious discrimination.

**RELIGIOUS SYNCRETISM**

Observers of the religious scene in America took note of an emerging phenomenon—the blending of disparate faiths with the aim of promoting interreligious understanding, or even creating a new universal religion. New York Times religion editor Kenneth Briggs, in a report on this phenomenon, indicated that "it is no longer unusual to find Catholic monks practicing Zen Buddhism," and that "hundreds of churches annually hold a seder service each year at the Jewish Passover." Two Long Island Lutheran churches which incorporated Jewish rituals into their regular service were suspended by Lutheran authorities on grounds of "subordinating the Christian Gospel to Jewish religious and social customs." The Christian Science Monitor, quoting unidentified "leading ecumenists," reported on an emerging "new stage" of church unity in which doctrinal differences were minimized. It noted that 19 major American denominations, with a combined membership of 23 million, were exploring the possibility of forming a union under the auspices of the Princeton-based Consultation on Church Union.

**PROSELYTIZERS**

Efforts to convert Jews to Christianity appeared to increase. Various proselytizing groups utilized converted Jews to carry out their mission in some 40 states. "Hebrew-Christians" groups, including the American Board of Missions to the Jews, Beth Yehoshua, and Jews for Jesus, began to utilize sophisticated media and marketing techniques, purchasing full-page advertisements in metropolitan dailies, and radio and television time. Statistics on the number of conversions were impossible to obtain.

The Unification Church and its leader Sun Myung Moon continued to be a source of controversy. The news media carried stories about Moon's extensive financial holdings, his alleged ties to South Korean intelligence agencies, and the claims of anguished parents who insisted that their children were virtual captives of the Unification Church. Leaders of three major Protestant, Catholic and Jewish organizations denounced the Unification Church as a "fecund breeding ground" for anti-Semitic, anti-Christian, and anti-democratic beliefs.

Both the Hare Krishna sect and the Children of God movement came into increasing conflict with established Christian churches and civil authorities over charges of duress in their proselytizing efforts. The Federal Bureau of Investigation
had more than a dozen cases under investigation involving alleged assaults or kidnappings by Hare Krishna and Children of God members, and at least six state legislatures contemplated resolutions to limit or investigate their activities.

**Extremism**

**NAZIS**

A small, fragmented, politically insignificant American Nazi movement generated a tremendous amount of publicity in 1977. Adopting a tactic successfully utilized by Great Britain's neo-Nazi National Front—confrontation in racially sensitive areas—the Chicago-based National Socialist Party of America (one of the seven or eight Nazi groups claiming national membership) announced early in 1977 its intention to demonstrate in Skokie, Illinois, on Hitler's birthday. Skokie was chosen because approximately half its population of 70,000 is Jewish; 7,000 Holocaust survivors live there. From April through July, a series of legal maneuvers by Skokie officials to enjoin the march proceeded through state and federal courts. At the same time, town officials enacted ordinances requiring all permit applicants to obtain $350,000 worth of insurance, prohibiting the dissemination of material which incited racial or religious hatred, and banning public demonstrations by members of political parties wearing military-style uniforms. During the entire period, the news media provided extensive coverage of the events.

Adding to the public's interest in the Skokie affair was the prominent role played by the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), which defended the Nazis in court. The ACLU's involvement on behalf of the Chicago Nazis resulted in the immediate loss of more than 2,000 members. ACLU officials met with representatives of national Jewish organizations in an attempt to explain their motivation in defending the Nazis' right to march in full uniform. The ACLU argued that it was defending the First Amendment, and not the Nazis. Editorial comment was widespread, with the overwhelming majority of newspapers defending the Nazis' right to march.

As the case worked its way through the courts, resentment against the Nazis' contemplated march mounted in the American Jewish community. The large concentration camp survivor element in Skokie viewed the march as indicative of a revived Nazi movement. By the end of the year, while the matter was still before the courts, the Jews of Skokie, and Jewish groups all over America, were devising plans for a massive counter-demonstration if the Nazis, in the end, received the necessary permits to march.

Despite the fears of many that the situation in Skokie was indicative of a resurgent Nazi movement, an exhaustive study by the American Jewish Committee revealed that total Nazi membership in the United States was no more than 1,500 to 2,000. While there were many local Nazi groups, those claiming national membership were the National Socialist White People's Party (Arlington, Va.); the National Socialist
Party of America (Chicago); the National Socialist Movement (Cincinnati); the White Power Movement (Reedy, W. Va.); the NSDAP-Overseas Branch (Lincoln, Neb.); the National Socialist White Workers Party (San Francisco); the National Socialist League (Los Angeles); and the National Socialist Liberation Front (Los Angeles). In its assessment of the Nazi movement in America, the report concluded: "If, as the desperate Nazi groups maintain, their ultimate objective is to become the dominant political power, they manifest an abysmal ignorance of what motivates the American electorate. American Nazism has failed to develop a motivating philosophy, much less attract a political figure of stature to its cause."

During 1977, minor skirmishes between demonstrating Nazis and enraged citizens occurred in Milwaukee, St. Louis, and Oakland, California. In late March, a San Francisco-based Nazi unit opened a bookstore in an area with a large concentration of Holocaust survivors. The store was fire-bombed. In retaliation, local Nazis smashed the windows of Temple B'nai Emunah.

KLANS

The ability of David Duke, the intelligent, articulate, 27-year-old Grand Wizard of the Knights of the Ku Klux Klan, to attract media attention gave rise to speculation about a resurgence of the klans. Duke appeared on more than 600 radio and television programs all over the country, and was profiled in several national news magazines.

Several incidents helped focus attention on the klans. The Anti-Defamation League reported that it had uncovered the existence of a 50-member klan unit in the Far Rockaway section of Queens, which was the first manifestation of klan activity in the Metropolitan New York area since the 1920's. Police sources claimed that the report was greatly exaggerated. At a klan rally in Plains, Ga., President Carter's hometown, a man drove his automobile into the assembled crowd, injuring some 30 people, including klansmen and innocent bystanders. Klansmen battled with police on the steps of the state capitol building in Columbus, Ohio.

Estimates of actual klan membership varied. The Anti-Defamation League spoke of 8,000 klansmen—indicating a 60 per cent growth in national membership over the past two years. The Wall Street Journal, attributing its information to unidentified law enforcement agencies, reported the number of "hard core, dues-paying, robe-wearing klansmen" at 1,000.

The klan, like the neo-Nazi movement, was beset with feuds and rivalries. Approximately a dozen klans were operative in varying degrees during 1977. Among those claiming national membership, in addition to Duke's Knights of the Ku Klux Klan, were the United Klans of America, led by Robert Shelton; the Invisible Empire, Knights of the Ku Klux Klan, led by Bill Wilkinson; and the National Knights of the Ku Klux Klan, led by James Venable. Other klans, essentially statewide in scope, were the United Klans of Florida; the South Carolina Invisible Klan Empire; the Maryland Knights of the Ku Klux Klan; the Independent
Northern Klans (New York); the New Order of the Knights of the Ku Klux Klan (Missouri); the Independent Knights of the Ku Klux Klan of North Carolina; and the National Knights of the Ku Klux Klan (West Virginia).

HANAFIS

A major antisemitic incident, which became front-page news, occurred on March 9 in Washington, D.C., when seven members of the Hanafi Muslim sect occupied several floors of the national headquarters of B’nai B’rith. (Other Hanafis took over the Islamic Center on Embassy Row and a municipal building. A newsman covering the story at the latter site was shot dead.) The Hanafis, who threatened to kill their Jewish hostages, railed against Jewish control of the courts and the media. The crisis finally ended two days later, when police and F.B.I. negotiators, materially aided by Ambassadors Ghorbal of Egypt, Yaquib-Khan of Pakistan, and Zahedi of Iran—all Muslims—persuaded the Hanafis to surrender. Hamaas Khaalis, the Hanafi leader, and his followers were convicted of armed kidnapping and other crimes, and were given lengthy prison sentences.

In the aftermath of the siege and surrender, the Washington Post ran a feature article about the Hanafis which carried the title “Hanafi Muslim Blames ‘Zionist Jews’ for Group’s Plight.” The story, based on uncritical interviews with several members of the sect, quoted them as charging “Zionist Jews” with having attempted to destroy the Islamic faith throughout history. On April 14, the Jewish Community Council of Greater Washington condemned “the hatred spewed into our community by Hanafi pronouncements” and expressed shock at the “excessive space devoted by the Washington Post to totally unfounded allegations.”

MILTON ELLERIN
The United States, Israel, and the Middle East

During confirmation hearings on January 11, 1977, Secretary of State-designate Cyrus Vance told the Senate Foreign Relations Committee that resolving the Arab-Israel conflict would be "very high" on the agenda of the new Carter Administration. In the following months, the Administration pressed ahead with efforts to go beyond the bilateral disengagement agreements that the United States had helped Israel conclude with Egypt and Syria after the Yom Kippur War, and to achieve a comprehensive settlement between Israel and all its neighbors.

Carter Presses for Comprehensive Settlement

Both in aim and method, the Carter Administration differed from its immediate predecessor. Whereas the Kissinger diplomacy had been marked by secrecy, President Jimmy Carter took the lead in opening and encouraging public debate on the fundamental points at issue. Moreover, in place of the pragmatic step-by-step approach undertaken by the Nixon and Ford administrations, Carter decided to tackle all the issues at once and set as his goal the swift reconvening of the Geneva Conference as the framework for comprehensive peace talks. The Geneva Conference had last met briefly in the winter of 1973; its role then had been limited to the essentially ceremonial one of endorsing the already concluded Egyptian-Israeli disengagement agreement.

At his first press conference on January 31, Secretary Vance argued that it was "critically important" that the Geneva Conference be convened during 1977, and warned that delay would permit "all kinds of disruptive factors" to emerge. In this assessment, he echoed the views expressed to him by the ambassadors of Egypt, Lebanon, Syria, Saudi Arabia, and Kuwait, with whom he had met earlier in the month. The prospects for progress toward a comprehensive settlement were now more favorable than they had been in the past, Vance said, citing the apparent end of the Lebanese civil war, the "greater cohesion among the forces of moderation in the area," and the indicated willingness of "all the parties" to go to Geneva promptly. Vance had also met with Israeli Ambassador Simcha Dinitz, who had conveyed his government's readiness to cooperate in peace efforts. This optimistic assessment was made two weeks before Vance's first trip to the Middle East, where he was to learn that the substantive differences separating Israel and the Arab states—as well as the underlying inter-Arab rivalries—were far more profound than he had anticipated. Even such seemingly procedural questions as the nature of Palestinian representation at Geneva and the Russian role as co-chairman of the Conference were to arouse intense and bitter controversy.
The activist role undertaken by the Carter Administration in the Middle East had long been advocated by Zbigniew Brzezinski, who was appointed by the President as his national security adviser. Brzezinski had become Carter’s mentor in foreign affairs when the then Governor of Georgia had been invited to serve on the Trilateral Commission—a Rockefeller-funded project of which Brzezinski was the director. Never hesitant to express his views, Brzezinski had first set forth “A Plan for Peace in the Middle East: Separating Security from Territory,” in an article published in The New Leader on January 7, 1974; it proved to be a blueprint for the Carter program as it gradually unfolded. The attainment of peace, Brzezinski wrote, “requires American pressure on both parties to the dispute—and determined pressure.” The Israelis, for their part, “must yield political control over the Arab lands and peoples held since 1967—following certain minor rectifications, perhaps, . . .” while the Arabs had to agree to demilitarized zones, a UN peace-keeping force, and other safeguards written into “a peace treaty normalizing Israel-Arab relations.” The best solution for the West Bank, Brzezinski wrote, would be the creation of an “autonomous Palestinian-Arab state, linked to Jordan in a federal union.” The Gaza Strip would probably also be part of this state. “At the same time, all Israeli settlements established on the West Bank after 1967 would be disbanded.” Other supplementary components were to be a formal United States guarantee for Israel and a Middle East economic development plan.

Brzezinski pointed out that the extent of Washington’s leverage on Israel had been illustrated by Israel’s extraordinary dependence on American arms supplied during the Yom Kippur War. “The United States should not hesitate to use that influence to the fullest,” for a settlement of the Arab-Israel conflict was in the American national interest. U.S. intervention “is urgently required,” he wrote, to prevent jeopardizing important American assets in the region and the strengthening of Soviet influence. “What is more, so long as there is no agreement, the Arab oil embargo will wreak havoc within the international economy, and America’s primary links, namely those with Europe and Japan, will be severely strained.” Although Brzezinski’s dire prediction proved false, since the Arab oil embargo was lifted a few months later despite the absence of a comprehensive Arab-Israel settlement (AJYB, 1974–75, Vol. 75, pp. 136–37), his preoccupation with “the importance of oil in world affairs” did not diminish in subsequent years and was to remain a key influence on the Carter Administration’s Middle East policy.

Brzezinski and William Quandt, whom he appointed as his Middle East deputy on the National Security Council, had also served on the Rockefeller-funded Brookings Middle East Study Group, which completed its report, “Toward Peace in the Middle East,” at the end of 1975. Although less explicit on some points and more circumspect in its call for American pressure, the report endorsed the basic Brzezinski idea of a comprehensive settlement to be implemented in stages with active American participation in the process. The signers of the report, including Middle East scholars and several prominent individuals from both the Jewish and Arab American communities, stated: “We believe that, in exchange for the assured
establishment of peaceful relations with its neighbors and suitable security arrange-
ments, Israel should and would agree to withdraw to the June 5, 1967 lines, with
only such modifications as might be mutually accepted."

The Brookings report was presented to and read by President Carter. It was also
read by the Israeli Government, which was not pleased by the above formulation
and some other aspects of the report. It is therefore not surprising that the Carter
Administration and the Israeli Government soon found themselves at odds on
various aspects of Middle East policy. While these differences became more visible
and extensive after the election in May of Prime Minister Menachem Begin, differ-
ences had already begun to emerge between the Carter Administration and the
outgoing Labor Party.

Following Vance's return from his fact-finding mission to Israel, the four neigh-
boring Arab states, and Saudi Arabia, President Carter announced on February 16
that he would meet personally with Arab and Israeli leaders before the end of May,
in order to obtain a "clearer picture" of the Middle East scene. Only then, Carter
indicated to the press, would the Administration determine its proper role in pro-
moting an Arab-Israeli settlement. In actuality, however, the President did not wait
until June to publicly express his views.

U.S.-Israel Disagreements

The Administration took several actions which displeased Israel. On February 17,
President Carter cancelled the pending sale of 250 CBU-72 cluster bombs which had
been promised to Israel by the previous administration. The official reasons for the
cancellation were that the United States was reviewing its entire arms sale policy
and that President Carter regarded the cluster bombs as weapons of such an extreme
nature that the U.S. should not sell them. Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin told a radio
interviewer that during his visit to Washington in March he would try to reverse
Carter's decision.

Even more distressing to the Israelis was the Administration's decision to block
the pending sale of Israeli-made Kfir C-2 fighter bombers to Ecuador. The U.S. had
the right to veto the sale, since the planes contained American-made engines. The
Israelis regarded the loss of the $200-million sale as a serious blow to Israel's aircraft
industry, and to the country's efforts to achieve economic self-sufficiency. Secretary
Vance denied that the U.S. decision was intended to put pressure on Israel, and said
it was part of a general policy to restrain the Latin American arms race. But when,
at hearings on February 24, Senator Dennis DeConcini (D-Ariz.) of the Senate
Appropriations Subcommittee on Foreign Operations pointed out to Vance that
Ecuador would now turn to France or the Soviet Union to obtain similar aircraft,
Vance responded that the American decision was "firm and final," notwithstanding
the possibility that others would fill the gap.

The Israelis were also annoyed by the State Department's public rebuke to Israel
over its oil drilling in the Gulf of Suez, released on the eve of Vance's arrival in
Israel, and by officially inspired leaks of reports that Israel had illegally obtained American uranium to develop its nuclear weapons capability.

There was still some question in Israel, however, whether these actions were explicitly ordered by President Carter or whether they reflected the decisions of middle-level State and Defense Department bureaucrats who were pushing for a more "even-handed" American policy in the Middle East. Indeed, not all the early Carter Administration signals were anti-Israel. On the positive side, the Carter Administration increased by $285 million the economic assistance for Israel contained in the Ford Administration's proposal for fiscal 1978. The new Administration also turned down the visa application of Sabri Jiryis, the Palestine Liberation Organization's (PLO) Israeli affairs expert, who had been invited to attend an American Friends Service Committee conference near Washington in February. The official reason for the denial was that Jiryis' Sudanese passport and original visa application contained false information. The main reason for the rejection, however, was that the State Department felt that approval of the visit on the eve of Vance's trip to the Middle East would be interpreted as a significant gesture of American recognition of the PLO.

In a statement in Israel after meeting with Prime Minister Rabin on February 16, and again in an interview on CBS' Face the Nation on February 27, Vance ruled out PLO participation in a reconvened Geneva conference until the organization recognized Israel's right to exist, accepted UN Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338, and revised its national covenant, which specifically called for Israel's elimination. Asked if the U.S. would then recognize the PLO, Vance hedged and said that this would create "a new situation and we'll have to take a look at it."

Regarding the American role in a reconvened Geneva conference, which Vance said the Arab states and Israel had agreed to attend later in the year, the Secretary of State stressed that the United States should act as a "catalyst" in the negotiating process, but should not come up with a U.S. plan for an overall settlement. This would "hinder" rather than "help," he said.

Carter Outlines Peace Proposal

President Carter did not seem to heed his Secretary of State's advice. In welcoming Prime Minister Rabin to the White House on March 7, Carter reaffirmed the American commitment to Israel and stated that the American objective was permanent peace "so that Israel might have defensible borders, so that peace commitments would never be violated." The phrase "defensible borders" was immediately seized upon by reporters as reflecting a significant pro-Israel shift, since the term had been used by the Israelis to justify considerable territorial changes from the pre-1967 lines which the Israelis regarded as vulnerable and inherently indefensible. The Arabs, for their part, demanded that Israel withdraw from all the territories occupied in the June 1967 war. State Department officials tried to explain that the President's choice of words did not signify a change in American policy.
At a press conference on March 9—to the consternation of Israelis, Arabs, and diplomatic observers—President Carter elaborated his ideas for peace, ideas which bore a striking resemblance to the Brookings Report and the plan that Brzezinski had first proposed three years earlier. Carter dismissed the defensible borders phrase as "just semantics" and proceeded to distinguish between defense lines and "permanent and recognized borders where sovereignty is legal as mutually agreed." He went on to suggest that "there may be extensions of Israeli defense capability beyond the permanent and recognized borders." The components of this defense capability might include Israeli forces, outposts, and electronic monitoring stations as in the Sinai Agreement, and possibly international forces and demilitarized zones. He saw such an arrangement as lasting for an interim period of between two and "eight years or more," during which there would develop "a mutual demonstration of friendship" and an end to the state of war. The President asserted that the United States and Israel shared the same conception of peace, which included not simply an end of belligerence, but also Arab recognition of Israel's "right to exist in peace, the opening up of borders with free trade, tourist travel, cultural exchange between Israel and her neighbors." Peace would involve "substantial withdrawal" of Israeli forces, although there might be "some minor adjustments in the 1967 borders." In response to a follow-up question, he reiterated that there might be "minor adjustments to the pre-1967 borders," but that this was a matter for Israel and her neighbors to decide. He did not wish to define the exact delineation of borders, noting that he had not yet had a chance to meet with Arab leaders to get their views. In addition to peace and defined borders, the third component in a settlement, he said, was "dealing with the Palestinian question." Carter concluded by insisting that he was not trying to lay down the final terms of a settlement, saying, "I don't know what an ultimate settlement will be."

The Israelis, while pleased with the President's definition of peace, were disturbed by his repeated reference to minor adjustments. They believed that the President had seriously undermined their bargaining position, since the Arabs were certainly not going to accept anything less than what the United States, Israel's major supporter in the international arena, believed that Israel should yield. When Secretary of State William Rogers had made public a similar proposal in 1969, it was shelved after encountering strong Israeli and Arab objections. It was easier to ignore the Rogers plan since it never was formally endorsed by President Nixon. But now President Carter had put his personal prestige behind a Middle East peace plan.

Carter contended that it was healthy for the points at issue to be "freely and openly debated within our own country and within the countries involved." In response to a question at a town meeting in Clinton, Mass. on March 16, Carter declared that the establishment of Israel was "one of the finest acts of the world nations that has ever occurred." He then went on to define his vision of peace. After reiterating his earlier definition of real peace and the need for agreement on permanent borders to be negotiated between the Arab countries and Israel, the President...
elaborated upon the Palestinian component in a comprehensive settlement. He noted that the Palestinians continued to claim that Israel had no right to exist and that they "have never yet given up their publicly professed commitment to destroy Israel. That has to be overcome." The President continued, "There has to be a homeland provided for the Palestinian refugees who have suffered for many, many years. And the exact way to solve the Palestinian problem is one that first of all addresses itself right now to the Arab countries and then, secondly, to the Arab countries negotiating with Israel." On the plane back to Washington, Carter amplified his reference to a Palestinian homeland by saying that some provision had "to be made for the Palestinians, in the framework of the nation of Jordan or by some other means."

Although he had made similar comments before he became President, the Israelis were considerably upset, and the Arabs pleased, by the acknowledgement for the first time by an American president in recent years that the Palestinians should be regarded as a group entitled to a homeland, and not merely as individual refugees entitled to repatriation or compensation and resettlement. For the Israelis in particular the term "homeland" had nationalistic connotations, since it was the concept of the Jewish national home, incorporated into the Balfour Declaration and the League of Nations Palestine Mandate, that served as the basis for the eventual creation of the Jewish state in 1948. Moreover, the President seemed to be implicitly acknowledging that the PLO spoke for all Palestinians when he said that "the Palestinians" had not given up their objective to destroy Israel, ignoring the fact that there were a considerable number of Palestinian Arabs on the West Bank and elsewhere who were prepared to coexist with Israel.

In his Clinton remarks, the President also emphasized that if there were no progress toward peace, a major war might erupt in the Middle East "which could quickly spread to all the other nations in the world." While the United States could survive an oil embargo, he said, "many countries depend completely on oil from the Middle East for their life." Because this was such a crucial area of the world, Carter said, he would be "devoting a major part of my own time on foreign policy between now and next Fall, trying to provide for a forum within which they can discuss their problems and, hopefully, let them seek out among themselves some permanent solution."

**U.S. Attitude to the PLO**

The Carter Administration was, in fact, engaged at the time in behind-the-scenes efforts to get the PLO to modify its public position in the hope of bringing a reborn, peace-loving PLO into the Geneva negotiating process.

At the start of 1977 rumors were rife that the PLO was ready to moderate its position and adopt a more realistic posture toward coexistence with Israel. Palestinian "spokesmen" visiting the United States and Western Europe reinforced the idea that the PLO leadership was going through an agonizing reappraisal. One
reason frequently cited was the military setback suffered by the extremist Palesti-
nians in their confrontation with Syrian forces in Lebanon. Another was the apparent
determination of the Arab confrontation states of Egypt, Jordan, and Syria, with
the powerful backing of Saudi Arabia, to embark upon a "peace initiative" leading
to a Geneva conference, in which they would press for establishment of a mini-
Palestinian state to be carved out of the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Faced with the
choice of accepting coexistence with Israel or being frozen out of the negotiations
altogether, the PLO leadership was allegedly being prodded by the Arab states to
scale down its ambitions.

United Nations Secretary General Kurt Waldheim reported on February 16, after
completing a trip to the Middle East, that PLO leader Yasir Arafat now appeared
to be "more flexible." Waldheim concluded that an evolutionary process was under-
way in the PLO, leading the group away from insistence on a secular, democratic
state embracing all of Palestine including Israel, and toward acceptance of a
"smaller solution." The UN chief suggested that Israel and the PLO might come
to "mutually recognize each other" during negotiations, although Israeli officials
had clearly ruled out any PLO participation in Geneva. Waldheim explained that
it was not feasible to meet the goal set by the General Assembly in a resolution
calling for the start of the Geneva Conference by March 31, even though both the
Arab states and Israel had indicated "a very clear and visible interest" in negotia-
tions. A major test of PLO intentions, Waldheim said, would come in the forthcom-
ing meeting of the Palestine National Council (PNC) scheduled to begin in Cairo
on March 12.

After talking with Secretary of State Vance in Cairo on February 17, Egyptian
President Anwar Sadat told reporters that he was urging Jordan and the Palestini-
ans to forge an "open and declared" link, preferably in the form of a confederation,
"even before the Geneva Conference meets." Sadat did not spell out how this was
to be accomplished. His main concern was to prevent the Palestinian issue from
blocking the resumption of Geneva talks. He hoped that if the Palestinians were
incorporated within a Jordanian framework, this would overcome American and
Israeli opposition to dealing with the Palestinians as officials of the PLO. Moreover,
Senior Egyptian officials had conferred with Arafat earlier in the day, leading Vance
to say that he had "the feeling" that the Egyptians were exerting pressure on the
PLO to amend its covenant so as to acknowledge Israel's existence.

Jordan's King Hussein had already proposed a confederation under his leadership
as far back as 1972, but had shelved the idea after the Arab summit conference in
Rabat in 1974 declared the PLO to be the Palestinians' sole legitimate representa-
tive. After meeting with Sadat in mid-January 1977, Hussein reiterated his desire
for the "establishment of the closest relations" between Jordan and a West Bank
Palestinian state, but significantly omitted reference to the PLO. Hussein agreed
finally to meet with Arafat in Cairo during an Arab-African conference on March
8. They agreed "in principle" on the need for a strong link between Jordan and a
projected Palestinian state, but no details were revealed as to the nature and extent
of the cooperation, nor was there any indication as to how quickly the proposed link was to be established. In fact, many in the PLO opposed any real cooperation with King Hussein, and the Jordanian monarch remained wary of the PLO's intentions. Nothing tangible came out of the Hussein-Arafat meeting, and Jordan played a cautious waiting game throughout the period under review.

The United States Government was also trying to bring about a change in the intransigent official Palestinian position. It was no accident that President Carter, for the first time, gave official governmental backing to the concept of a Palestinian "homeland" in his Clinton remarks on March 16, while the Palestine National Council was meeting in Cairo. Arafat, when told by reporters of the President's remarks, termed Carter's reference to a Palestinian homeland as "a very important note" and as a "progressive step," because it meant that Carter "has finally put his hand on the heart of the problem of the Middle East crisis." In an interview with CBS, Arafat expressed the hope that the President's statement signified "a first step towards a better understanding of the Palestinian cause by the American people," and added that he personally trusted President Carter and was prepared to cooperate with him. Arafat's assessment was, however, immediately challenged by others at the PNC session. Taisir Kubbaa, representative of the rejectionist Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, declared: "We do not agree with Arafat. Carter is our main enemy; Israel is only a tool. We reject cooperation with our main enemy."

The Carter Administration sent a second signal to the PLO the following day, on March 17, when the PLO observer to the United Nations, Hassan Abdel Rahman, was invited to hear the President's address to the General Assembly and to attend the following champagne reception, at which the President shook hands with him. Arafat termed the gesture a "very important signal." In response to protests by Israeli officials and American Jewish leaders at this obvious departure from the long-standing American policy of rejecting any official contacts with the PLO so long as it had not abandoned its commitment to Israel's destruction, State Department officials tried to minimize the significance of the action by placing the responsibility for the invitation on the UN Secretary-General, who was the host. The White House also tried to limit the publicity impact of the event by asking that photographers be barred from the reception. Nevertheless, the prevailing view was that the President's action was intentional and of symbolic significance.

The official 15-point political declaration adopted by the PNC in Cairo on March 20 proved disappointing to the Carter Administration, for it did not change the PLO Covenant or express any readiness to coexist with Israel. A State Department comment noted that since the Cairo conference decisions did not alter the PLO's refusal to accept Israel, they would "not contribute" to a resolution of the Middle East conflict.

Some press reports, quoting unnamed Western diplomats in Cairo, found "positive" and "constructive" elements in the declaration. They were apparently reflecting the optimistic briefings by Egyptian officials, who also inspired the official Egyptian newspaper *Al Goumhouriah* to carry, on March 22, a front-page, red
banner headline declaring, "The Palestine Liberation Organization is willing to go to Geneva." However, a close look at the actual PLO declaration made it quite clear that the kind of conference and the outcome envisaged were not what President Carter had outlined in his three-point program for peace.

The hard line adopted by the PNC in Cairo, despite the control of the meetings by the reputedly more "moderate" wing of the PLO, was in sharp contrast to the optimistic forecasts. The lengthy official PNC declaration refused even to mention the word "Israel." The declaration began by affirming that the Palestine issue was the essence of "the Arab-Zionist conflict." It asked all states to cut off all assistance to and cooperation with what it termed "the racist Zionist regime." The PNC called for escalation of armed struggle, rejected "all kinds of American capitulationist settlements and liquidationist projects," threatened to abort the American peace effort, and called on all Arab states to "strengthen the Palestinian revolution in order to cope with the imperialist and Zionist designs."

Although the PNC did not formally modify the covenant calling for Israel's dissolution, and the 15-point political declaration retained much of the militant anti-Israel rhetoric, it still was not extreme enough for George Habash's Marxist Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine. The PFLP was annoyed that the PNC had not reaffirmed the 1974 program calling for the revolutionary masses to overthrow King Hussein. The Popular Front rejected the new PLO policy of cooperating with the Arab regimes, since the PFLP contended that "Sadat, Assad, and Hussein are fully within the U.S. orbit." Accordingly, the PFLP declined to occupy its seat on the new PLO executive committee.

Said Hammami, the PLO's representative in London who had long taken a more pragmatic public line toward Israel, made a virtue of necessity and contended that the exclusion of the extremist PFLP from the new executive committee "was the most significant political decision" of the Cairo Council session. Others pointed out that the executive committee, which was largely dominated by Arafat's al-Fatah, was now empowered to decide about PLO participation in a Geneva conference, whereas prior to the Cairo conference such a decision required a new special session of the PNC. It was this new fact that prompted the Carter Administration to continue its efforts during the year to induce the PLO to modify its public posture sufficiently to bring it into the Geneva negotiations. Brzezinski, in particular, had not yet changed his own view, expressed in an article in Foreign Policy's Summer 1975 issue, that to tackle "the central problem in the Middle East conflict," the relationship between Israel and the Palestinians, "almost certainly means, in practice, the PLO."

While Hammami was indicating that a Palestinian state would coexist with Israel, Farouk Kaddoumi, head of the PLO's political department, made it clear that the organization's shift was tactical and did not reflect a change in ultimate aims: "We are prepared to be flexible and to agree to the establishment of a state on part of our land, but we will never recognize the state of Israel." As-Saiqa leader Zuhair Mohsen, who was also a member of the executive committee and head of the PLO's
military department, was even more explicit: “Our sole aim in establishing the West Bank Palestinian state is to support our demand for the rest of Palestine.” It was these militant assertions that convinced other rejectionist organizations, such as the Arab Liberation Front and the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine-General Command, to vote for the Cairo declaration and to join the new executive committee.

Sadat-Carter Talks

During Sadat’s visit to Washington in April, he emphasized to President Carter that the Palestinian question was “the core and crux” of the Arab-Israel dispute. In a toast at a White House dinner on April 4, he praised Carter for coming “very close to the proper remedy” in his remarks about the need for a homeland where, Sadat said, “they could establish a state.” On his arrival in Washington, Sadat had spoken of the need for establishment of “a political entity” where the Palestinians could “at long last be a community of citizens, not a group of refugees.” In other remarks as well, Sadat seemed to be vacillating between calling for a Palestinian state, which implied sovereign independence, and a more limited autonomy for the Palestinians within the larger framework of a confederation with Jordan. Sadat seemed less concerned with details than with finding some formula that would get the negotiating process started.

Sadat was also eager to obtain additional American financial help to meet Egypt’s increasingly serious economic problems, which had been highlighted by rioting in January following the Government’s institution of an austerity program cutting back food subsidies. Moreover, Sadat was anxious to get the United States to become a major source of equipment for Egypt’s armed forces. During his April visit, Sadat said he wanted some 200 F-5E fighters, as well as anti-tank weapons. Sadat insisted that he wanted the planes not to launch a new attack against Israel, but to deal with the threat of growing Soviet penetration of Africa. He drew an alarming picture of Soviet and Cuban activities in Africa that he said threatened not only Egypt but also the Sudan and Zaire as a result of Soviet involvement in Libya, Ethiopia, Angola, and Mozambique. At the end of the visit, the White House announced that “no commitments” were made in regard to Sadat’s specific arms requests, but “Egypt’s importance on the continent” was noted, and the two countries agreed to maintain “close, continuing discussions on developments in Africa.”

During the Washington visit, President Carter apparently had some influence on Sadat’s views as to the nature of the peace to be achieved with Israel. Earlier, Sadat had said that the most that could be expected was an end to the state of belligerence, with any normalization of relations having to wait for the next generation, because of the deep-seated nature of Arab-Israel hatred and mistrust. At a press conference at the end of his three-day April visit, Sadat responded to a question as to whether signing a Geneva agreement would lead to normalization by saying, “For sure, it will be normalization.” He added, however, that Egypt should not be pressed to
include such normalization as trade within the text of the final agreement. Carter Administration officials let it be known that Sadat had told the President that normalization could occur within about five years of a peace agreement.

**Hussein-Carter Meeting**

Sadat was followed to Washington later in April by King Hussein, and discussions centered on the thorny question of Palestinian representation in a Geneva conference. While Arafat had reportedly been insisting on a separate Palestinian delegation, Hussein favored the idea of a single Arab delegation including Palestinians. At the conclusion of two days of talks at the White House, on April 26, Hussein told reporters that "Geneva would be a disaster without prior planning and without a realistic appraisal of all the difficulties and possibilities" in advance of the conference. He called on Israel to make "a gamble for peace" by agreeing to withdrawal to the pre-1967 lines.

Carter echoed Hussein's caution and suggested that it might be better not to reconvene the Geneva Middle East Peace Conference unless there were "some strong possibility for substantial achievement." However, as the months passed and procedural issues remained unresolved, the Carter Administration, in its eagerness to demonstrate visible progress, began to press for a Geneva conference, notwithstanding the cautious advice Carter seemed to have accepted from Hussein.

**Assad-Carter Meeting**

President Hafez al-Assad of Syria was the next in the series of Arab leaders scheduled to meet with President Carter. But while Hussein had long been in the Western camp—indeed, an embarrassing revelation of CIA payments made over the years to the King had appeared in the Washington Post on the day of Vance's arrival in Amman in February—and President Sadat had in recent years been sharply feuding with the Russians, Assad was anxious to maintain his ties with Moscow. As a sign of his independence from the United States, Assad did not join the procession of Middle Eastern leaders to the White House. President Carter agreed to meet with Assad in Geneva at the conclusion of Carter's participation in a Western summit conference in London.

Assad and Carter met in Geneva on May 9 for three-and-a-half hours. They went into detail on the possibility of demilitarized zones and other security arrangements for the Golan Heights, in keeping with Brzezinski's thesis that Israel's security could be assured by means other than extension of Israeli sovereignty over territory occupied in the 1967 war. The talks were described by Brzezinski as "extremely valuable, very informative, very friendly." At their conclusion, Carter praised Assad for demonstrating his "good will" and included Assad as among the "strong and moderate leaders" in the Middle East seeking peace. Assad, in turn, expressed appreciation for President Carter's "sincerity" and agreed that a Middle East
conference in Geneva "should be well prepared." Carter's expressions, he said, had created an encouraging atmosphere of faith and optimism.

After the meeting with Assad, Carter reiterated to reporters that the components of peace must include "a resolution of the Palestine problem and a homeland for the Palestinians." Israeli authorities were troubled by Carter's praise for Assad as a moderate, and by the Administration's implication that defensible borders could be achieved through demilitarization—a view that was greeted with skepticism in Jerusalem, in view of the long record of Syrian violations of the demilitarized zones that had been created as part of the 1949 Syrian-Israeli Armistice Agreement. The Israelis were also distressed by Carter's failure to declare that a Palestinian homeland should be linked to Jordan. Carter did not allay these Israeli fears in a press conference a few days later, on May 12, when he stated that "the exact definition of where that homeland might be, the degree of independence of the Palestinian entity, its relationship with Jordan, or perhaps Syria and others, the geographical boundaries of it, all have to be worked out by the parties involved."

Carter also indicated that he believed there was "a chance that the Palestinians might make moves to recognize the right of Israel to exist," and that this would remove a major obstacle to progress. He recalled that the United States, "before I became President," had promised Israel that Washington would not recognize the PLO by direct conversations or negotiations, "as long as the PLO continued to espouse the commitment that Israel had to be destroyed." Carter said that "we are trying to add our efforts" to bring about a change in the PLO position. The Israelis concluded that the United States was eager to involve the PLO in the negotiations, and Jerusalem feared that Carter had bought the Arab thesis that a Palestinian state on the West Bank and Gaza would not pose an inherent threat to Israel, and that some gesture by the PLO toward coexistence with Israel would be enough to justify American contacts with the PLO.

Secretary Vance had tried to reassure the Israelis in a meeting with Foreign Minister Yigal Allon in London the previous day, May 11, that the American position on the PLO had not fundamentally changed, that the United States would not make public any peace plan before giving the parties a chance to react to it, and that the U.S. would continue to supply Israel with needed arms, together with "advanced technology." The latter had become an issue after the Carter Administration announced a new arms transfer policy, which would have excluded Israel from the list of countries, such as NATO members, with whom the United States was prepared to enter into co-production agreements for advanced weapons. (AJYB, 1978, [Vol. 78], pp. 103-104.)

**Israeli Apprehension Over U.S. Policy**

Despite the official disclaimers, in early May, apprehension was growing in Israel, and within the American Jewish community, that the Carter Administration was setting the stage for an imposed settlement in the Middle East. United Nations
Ambassador Andrew Young said that the United States would put forward “some formulations” of its own to break the stalemate. President Carter himself told three European journalists that he would not hesitate, if he saw a fair and equitable solution, “to use the full strength of our own country and its persuasive powers to bring those nations to agreement.” Secretary Vance also told the press that once the initial round of consultations with Middle East leaders was completed, the United States would make “suggestions on all the core issues.” He dismissed as a matter of semantics a reporter’s question as to whether these suggestions would amount to a comprehensive peace plan. The popular New York Daily News interpreted Vance’s remarks as indicating that he intended to take a “made in the U.S.A. peace plan” to the area on his next visit. “We hope the Carter Administration knows what it is doing,” the News editorialized on May 6, noting that the Carter approach “represents a significant departure from past policy, which was to cast the country solely in the role of honest broker between Israel and its Arab foes.” The News warned that “one false step and we could not only damage the prospects for successful negotiations, but destroy our usefulness as trusted middleman as well.”

The Administration also seemed oblivious to the consequences of its actions upon the Israeli public’s thinking. After Prime Minister Rabin had been replaced by Defense Minister Shimon Peres as leader of the ruling Labor Party, the Carter Administration continued to assume that Labor would win in the May 17 elections and that the timetable for Geneva would at most be delayed by a few weeks, to give the new Israeli leader a chance to meet with President Carter. The Carter Administration was completely unprepared for the results of the May elections, which led to the defeat of Labor and the formation of a government led by Menachem Begin of the opposition Likud Party. (See Louvish, pp. 260-266 for details.)

While it is true that Labor’s defeat after 29 years of continuous rule was due primarily to domestic factors, a credible case could be made for the argument that at least some of the strength gained by Likud was due to a popular feeling that in the impending peace negotiations the country needed tough new leadership that was prepared to stand up to American pressure. One of the major campaign arguments of the Labor Party had been that it had experience in dealing with America, and that it had successfully developed and nurtured the special relationship with the United States. Prime Minister Rabin had been Israel’s ambassador in Washington for some five years, and it was under the Labor governments that Israel had achieved unprecedented levels of American economic and military aid. The reported failure of Rabin to influence the Carter policy during his trip to Washington, signaled by the refusal of the Carter Administration to lift the ban of Kfir sales to Ecuador, the unveiling of the Palestinian homeland plan, the call for Israeli withdrawal to the 1967 lines with only minor changes, and the continuing American flirtation with the PLO, all undermined the credibility of the Labor Party’s claim to influence upon official Washington’s thinking.
**Soviet Mideast Policy**

While the Carter Administration was gathering most of the headlines in its quest for a resumed Geneva conference, the Soviet Union was also actively working to assure itself a place in the formal negotiations. Moscow was still smarting from the ignominy of being frozen out of the disengagement agreements that Dr. Kissinger had brought about between Israel and Egypt and Syria. The Carter approach appeared to be more receptive to a Soviet role. In a major address on March 21, Soviet party chief Brezhnev spoke in favor of "concerted actions" by the Soviet Union and the United States to achieve a just and lasting Middle East settlement. There were certain nuances in the speech that were considered mildly encouraging by Israel, such as Brezhnev's acknowledgment that the drawing up of detailed peace terms was "primarily a matter for the opposing sides themselves," that withdrawal could be carried out in stages, spaced over several months, that all states in the area had the right to "independent existence and security," and that from the moment of the completion of Israeli troop withdrawal "the state of war between the Arab states participating in the conflict and Israel will be ended and relations of peace established." The Soviet leader also favored the establishment of demilitarized zones and the possibility of a UN emergency force or UN observers. On the Palestinian question, Brezhnev declared: "It goes without saying that the inalienable rights of the Palestinian Arab people should be insured, including its right to self-determination, to the creation of its own state." In Jerusalem there was speculation that Moscow might be moving to a resumption of diplomatic relations with Israel, which the Soviet Union had broken in the wake of the 1967 war. But the hopes for a rapprochement between Moscow and Jerusalem were soon to be dashed.

On April 4, Yasir Arafat arrived on an official visit to Moscow and, for the first time, was publicly received by Brezhnev. On April 7, a joint statement was issued in which Brezhnev confirmed that the Soviet Union was striving for a comprehensive Middle East settlement, "a pillar of which must be the guaranteeing of the legitimate national rights of the Palestinian Arab people, their right to self-determination and their right to create an independent Palestinian state." The Soviet Union, the statement continued, "constantly and firmly supports the participation of PLO representatives in the Geneva Conference." Arafat emphasized that the Palestinian resistance movement would continue to struggle "against the intrigues of imperialism and reaction" and pledged to "strengthen its ties of friendship and cooperation with the Soviet Union and all the other socialist community countries." Arafat expressed his profound gratitude to the Soviet Union for its "consistent and all-round support."

The Soviet leadership in early 1977 also received Libya's Muammer Qaddafi and Iraq's Saddam Hussein. During the year, the Soviet Union significantly increased its military arms supply to both countries, according to CIA and other Western intelligence sources. This raised questions as to the sincerity of the Soviet Union's quest for a genuine Middle East settlement, since Iraq and Libya were vehemently
opposed to peace with Israel. Syrian President Assad also was promised increased military aid when he visited Moscow in April.

**Saudi Position**

Saudi Arabia was also busy trying to convince the world that the PLO was moderating its position. Crown Prince Fahd told American journalists in Jidda on May 10 that he believed "the leaders of the Palestinian people will be willing to accept any peaceful solution to the problem, if that peaceful solution includes the establishment of a Palestinian state on the West Bank and the Gaza Strip." Fahd stressed that it was imperative to find a solution during 1977; otherwise, "disturbances and tensions" would rise and a renewal of conflict was possible. Foreign Minister Prince Saud al Faisal similarly asserted that failure to reach a solution would lead to "an international catastrophe." Nevertheless, both Fahd and Saud, as well as Petroleum and Mineral Resources Minister Sheikh Zaki Yamani, insisted that neither the pricing nor the production level of Saudi oil would be used as a means to force a solution.

Following the Begin victory in Israel, Egyptian Foreign Minister Ismail Fahmi raised the prospect of a new Arab oil embargo in a meeting with reporters on May 22. Oil, he said, "is one of the Arabs' principal weapons, and there should be no doubt that it will be used automatically if Israel persists in its aggression against occupied Arab lands." However, after Saudi Crown Prince Fahd completed two days of talks at the White House on May 25, President Carter said that he had been assured by Fahd that the threat of an embargo was a "completely false report." Carter added that he found "no disturbing differences" about the Middle East in his talks with the Saudi leader and that Fahd had assured him that the Saudis were prepared to live in peace with Israel. Fahd again emphasized the Palestinian issue as the core of the Middle East problem, and Saudi officials privately expressed confidence that President Carter would soon endorse a West Bank-Gaza state. Carter emphasized the vast economic interests that linked the Saudis and Americans, noting that the Saudis had invested about $60 billion in the United States and were "one of our largest customers," buying $3.5 billion in American goods annually, with that figure expected to grow. This "very important" relationship, Carter said, "helps to tie us together in dealing with political problems which we face in a mutual way." A $100-million, joint Saudi-American solar-energy research program was announced during the visit. Fahd declined to speculate on what effect the Begin election would have on peace prospects, but asked Carter to urge the Israelis not to close the door on a settlement "that would provide a just and lasting peace."

**U.S. Reaction to Begin Victory**

Two days after his election, Menachem Begin visited the Gush Emunim (Bloc of the Faithful) Jewish settlement of Elon Moreh in the West Bank area of Camp
Kaddum to dedicate a synagogue. In his remarks, he declared that in the next few months "there will be many Elon Morehs." The Labor government had refused to grant official recognition to the privately established settlement, since it wished to see settlements only in strategically important areas and not near Arab population centers. In response to a reporter's question as to whether he intended to annex the West Bank, Begin pointed out that since the area of Judea and Samaria was an integral part of the sovereign Jewish land of Israel, he regarded the area as "liberated" and not annexed. The Likud had run on a platform declaring that there would be no foreign rule in the area west of the Jordan River.

These statements and actions, which seemed to reject the concept of territorial compromise advocated by the previous Labor government, aroused deep concern in the United States. In an address at Notre Dame University on May 22, President Carter inserted a sentence declaring: "We expect Israel and her neighbors to continue to be bound" by the obligations undertaken in UN Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338. In his press conference on May 26, the President reiterated that "withdrawal from West Bank territories—either partially or in their entirety" was envisaged in any ultimate settlement. He refrained from drawing any exact lines, he said, since this was for the parties to work out.

Carter was asked whether he thought Begin's views would constitute an obstacle to peace. The President responded that he did not think this would be an insuperable problem, noting that Begin would have to reconcile conflicting interests to form a cabinet. Carter also expressed confidence that Begin's views would be modified "when I meet him personally, and when he meets with the Congressional leaders and with the Jewish Americans who are very deeply interested in this and see the purpose of our own country."

The President's remarks foreshadowed intensive efforts by both the Carter Administration and the Begin Government to enlist support within the American Jewish community for their respective approaches to a Middle East settlement. American Jews became increasingly uneasy at the prospect that in a confrontation between the two governments they would be forced to choose sides. Matters were not helped by intimations in some Jewish circles that any dissent from the Begin policies was a betrayal of Israel, and by veiled hints by Administration advocates that opposition to the Carter policy by special interest groups was against the U.S. national interest.

In a major speech on June 17 before the World Affairs Council in San Francisco, Vice-President Walter F. Mondale sought to explain the Administration's policy and to reassure the Jewish community. He underscored the United States' "unique and profound relationship" with Israel since its creation. "Our sense of shared values and purposes," he said, means that for Americans "the question of Israel's survival is not a political question, but rather stands as a moral imperative of our foreign policy." Mondale also stressed the need for direct negotiations between the Arab states and Israel, and reasserted that the Carter Administration did "not intend to use military aid as pressure on Israel." He conceded that there might be
differences over military aid, but insisted that these would only be on military or economic grounds, but not on political grounds. Differences over diplomatic strategy would be worked out on the political level, but would not alter the American commitment to Israel's military security. He added that the U.S. realized that "peace cannot be imposed from the outside, and we do not intend to present the parties with a plan or a timetable or a map." At the same time, Mondale reiterated the Administration's optimistic view that all the Arab leaders with whom Carter met had a "great desire for peace." Moreover, Mondale elaborated on the Brzezinski thesis that security arrangements would be separated from recognized boundaries and, in this way, Israel could return "to approximately the borders that existed prior to the war of 1967." On the Palestinian question, he endorsed the possibility of some arrangement "for a Palestinian homeland or entity—preferably in association with Jordan." Such an association would enhance the viability of the concept and the security of the region, he said in the name of the President. But then he quickly added that "the specifics are for the parties to decide."

**Criticism of Carter Policy**

The Mondale speech failed to reassure the Israelis, and was criticized in the United States. Senator Jacob K. Javits (R-N.Y.), a ranking member of the Foreign Relations Committee, said the Carter proposals might undercut the possibility of a successful U.S. role as mediator. The "persistent public advocacy" by the Carter Administration of Israeli withdrawal to "approximately" the June 1967 lines and the establishment of a Palestinian entity prior to any negotiations between Arab and Israeli leaders, Javits warned, "can only continue to feed Arab illusions that President Carter will deliver to them what they have been unable to deliver to themselves" by other means, including war. To be "as specific as Vice-President Mondale's blueprint of the Administration's position, in advance of Geneva, has raised both Arab expectations and Israeli fears, thereby inviting failure."

On June 27, shortly before Prime Minister Begin's arrival in Washington, the State Department issued a statement on the Administration's Middle East policy pointedly emphasizing consistent American support for the principles in UN Security Council Resolution 242 and their application through negotiations as called for in Resolution 338. In an attempt to allay the criticism of the Carter policy, the State Department statement stressed that the United States "was not asking for any one-sided concessions from anyone," adding that the Arabs would have to agree to a durable peace with satisfactory security arrangements and normalization of relations with Israel. The new point in the statement, however, was its emphasis that the United States considered that Resolution 242 "means withdrawal from all three fronts in the Middle East dispute—that is, Sinai, Golan, West Bank and Gaza—the exact borders and security arrangements being agreed in negotiations." Such negotiations, the State Department stressed, "must start without any preconditions from any side." To automatically exclude any territories from negotiation "strikes
us as contradictory to the principle of negotiations without preconditions." This was taken by the Israelis as a pointed criticism of Prime Minister Begin's declarations that the withdrawal provisions of Resolution 242 did not apply to Judea and Samaria (the West Bank), since these areas were not taken by Israel from any legitimate foreign sovereign, but had been liberated from the illegal Jordanian occupation of 1948.

In an effort to avoid an immediate confrontation with the U.S. on this matter, the new Israeli government's Basic Policy Guidelines, adopted on June 20, declared that although the Knesset had empowered the Cabinet to apply by administrative order "the law, judiciary and administration of the state to all territory of the Land of Israel" (presumably including the West Bank and Gaza), the Government would not invoke this authority "so long as negotiations are being conducted on a peace treaty between Israel and its neighbors." The Government also promised to bring this matter up for special debate and approval by the Knesset before taking such action. This compromise language was reportedly adopted upon the urging of Foreign Minister Moshe Dayan.

President Carter was also anxious to avoid a confrontation. Concerned by the mounting criticism in the Jewish community of his Middle East policy, he invited Rabbi Alexander M. Schindler, chairman of the Conference of Major American Jewish Organizations, and some 40 other American Jewish leaders to the White House on July 6. He emphasized that the definition of peace that he was urging the Arab leaders to accept included full diplomatic relations with Israel at the ambassadorial level, trade, tourism, and cultural exchanges. He was much more explicit than he had been in public in expressing opposition to a fully independent Palestinian state. He was quoted by one of the participants at the closed-door session as saying: "We see any kind of Palestinian entity as tied to Jordan. Anything else would be a distinct threat to peace; it could easily be used by Qaddafi or the Soviets as a threat to peace. We don't envisage an independent state at all." Carter added that several of the Arab leaders with whom he met shared his view. He did not cite them by name, but on July 10, after meeting in Alexandria, President Sadat and King Hussein agreed to secure a Palestinian role in the Geneva talks by establishing an "explicit link between Jordan and the Palestinians" on the West Bank.

There were different assessments of the White House Jewish meeting. Rabbi Schindler characterized it as "a very fruitful, helpful and frank discussion," adding that the group was particularly pleased by the President's definition of peace, and "reassured" by Carter's statements that there was no deviation in his support of Israel expressed during the Presidential campaign. Rabbi William Berkowitz, president of Bnai Zion, disagreed. He believed that Carter had "still left many gaps and doubts and unanswered questions about American policy vis-à-vis Israel." He came away from the "inconclusive, unclear and fuzzy" meeting with the impression that the Administration believed peace required Israel to withdraw to the pre-1967 borders. Berkowitz asserted that there was a continuing erosion of support for Carter among "average Jewish voters," and while some in the Jewish community
"may have been convinced, many are still skeptical" regarding Carter's policy toward Israel.

Carter-Begin Meeting

The widely-predicted American-Israeli confrontation was avoided during the White House meetings on July 19 and 20, as both leaders agreed to concentrate on the procedural steps necessary to bring about negotiations. Commenting on the Israeli elections, Carter noted that Begin represented a nation which demonstrated "the importance of a true democracy where people in an absolutely unconstrained expression of individual preference in open elections can decide who their leader will be." The President added that he was "very proud" of Prime Minister Begin's attitude that all issues were negotiable, and encouraged by Begin's statements that he hoped that talks with Sadat, Hussein, and Assad could commence in Geneva in October.

At a press conference in Washington, Begin described his proposals for a framework for direct negotiations, in accordance with Security Council Resolution 338, adding that the government of Israel "acknowledges that Resolution 338 includes and makes reference to Security Council Resolution 242." Israel would negotiate with the accredited delegates of Egypt, Syria, and Jordan—as well as Lebanon, if the latter wished to join. The negotiations were to be free and with no prior commitments by either side. Israel proposed a format of separate bilateral commissions composed of Israel and each of her neighbors. Begin categorically rejected the participation of the PLO as a separate delegation or as part of another Arab delegation, since the PLO's "design is to destroy our country and to destroy our people." However, Israel would not object to the participation of individual Palestinian Arabs within the Jordanian delegation. Should the Arab states insist on the participation of the PLO, which would make it impossible to reconvene a full-fledged Geneva conference, Begin said, then Israel suggested two alternatives: either the United States should use its good offices to establish three or four mixed commissions for separate bilateral talks on the model of the Rhodes negotiations which led to the 1949 series of Armistice Agreements; or the United States should revive the 1972 idea of proximity talks by which the American delegate would initially shuttle between the representatives of Israel and one or more Arab states meeting in New York or another city, with the U.S. using its good offices to bring them together.

Controversy Over Settlement Policy

Upon Begin's return to Israel, the Cabinet Committee on Settlements gave official recognition to three Gush Emunim civilian settlements in the heart of the West Bank which the previous Labor government had refused to legalize. At his press conference two days later, President Carter said that he had let Prime Minister
Begin knew “very strongly” that creation of new settlements would cause “deep concern” to the American Government. Carter added that Israeli settlements in occupied territory had “always been characterized by our government, by me and my predecessors, as an illegal action.” Carter said that he had not specifically discussed the question of legalizing existing settlements with Begin, and that the Israeli leader had not given him any prior notice.

On August 14, the Israeli Government announced that it was extending economic and social services to the inhabitants of the West Bank and Gaza, to grant them rights equal to those enjoyed by residents of Israel. The following day, Begin explained that the move was “by no means the beginning of annexation, but was motivated solely by a desire to improve the lot of the Arabs under Israeli rule.” On August 17, the Government approved the establishment of three new settlements on the West Bank. The State Department responded with a strongly worded statement, approved by President Carter, reiterating that these “unilateral illegal acts in territories presently under Israeli occupation create obstacles to constructive negotiations.” A second statement, while noting the “humanitarian aims” of Israel’s extension of economic and social services in the West Bank and Gaza, pointed out that “the action creates an impression of permanence of Israeli occupation . . . that is not helpful.” Israeli spokesmen countered by pointing out that the three new settlements were all in close proximity to the 1949 Armistice Demarcation Lines and thus fell within the category of minor modifications that the United States had sanctioned. Moreover, the three settlements had been approved in principle by the previous Labor government, since they could be justified by the need for “secure” boundaries and thus fit into the Allon Plan formula.

Jewish Community Reaction to Begin

Begin’s election, his more active settlement policy, and his outspoken opposition to territorial compromise on the West Bank aroused misgivings among many American Jews. Rabbi Schindler and the leaders of such intergroup relations organizations as the American Jewish Committee, the American Jewish Congress, and the Anti-Defamation League of B’nai B’rith spoke privately with Begin and other members of his government to convey their concern over the difficulties they were encountering in explaining certain Israeli policies and tactics to the American public. However, these misgivings were rarely given public expression during the period under review. There was a general feeling that the new government in Israel should be given a chance to prove itself, especially since it was premature to judge whether Begin’s seemingly tough stance represented an inflexible ideological commitment, or was a diplomatic bargaining position that might be modified in the course of negotiations with the Arab states. Moreover, in view of the mounting pressure on Israel in the international arena and the activist policy being followed by the Carter Administration, there was widespread concern within the Jewish
community that any public criticism of the Begin Government would be seized upon by elements unfriendly to Israel and used to justify their own criticism of Israeli policies. Finally, there was a widespread feeling among the Jewish masses that American Jews should be supportive of whatever government had been democratically elected in Israel, especially in questions affecting Israel's security.

It is noteworthy that even Breira refrained from publicly criticizing the Begin Government. Breira (Alternative), founded in 1973, had been vocal in its criticism of the Israeli Government for its handling of the Arab-Israel conflict. Although Breira never achieved a membership of more than 1,500, its ability to attract some individuals prominent in the rabbinate, on campuses and in the Jewish institutional world, and the public relations skills of some of its spokesmen, had enabled Breira to get considerable press coverage for its views. Breira encountered intensive criticism in early 1977 from several Anglo-Jewish publications, which attacked not only the substance of its positions, but impugned the motives of its advocates. Most of the criticism had focused on Breira's advocacy of the creation of an independent Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, and the call for negotiations by Israel with any Palestinians who had renounced terrorism and accepted Israel's right to exist.

Vance's Second Middle East Trip

On August 1, Secretary of State Vance opened the second round of his Middle East travels with a meeting with President Sadat in Alexandria. The Egyptian leader proposed that in preparation for a full-fledged Geneva conference the foreign ministers of the Arab states and Israel meet in New York or Washington in mid-September as a working group. This was seen as a way to bypass the problem of PLO participation in the initial stages. He indicated that he had no objection to the Israeli and Egyptian representatives sitting together. Vance welcomed the idea, saying that the better prepared a Geneva conference was, the greater its chances of success. However, Vance said, it was up to the Arabs to decide if they favored the idea. The Syrians promptly announced that they rejected the working group proposal, and President Assad emphasized that there would be no direct or indirect meetings between the Syrian Foreign Minister and Israeli officials at the UN.

After meeting with Lebanese President Elias Sarkis in Beirut on August 3, Vance announced that the Carter Administration would ask Congress to approve $100 million in military credits over the next three years to help Lebanon build up a 3,000-man militia for domestic security. The continuation of factional strife and the absence of Lebanese central government control in the south led to frequent clashes between Christian and Moslem villagers, and to guerrilla raids by Palestinian militants. Earlier in the year, the U.S. had several times exerted behind-the-scenes diplomatic efforts to dissuade Israel and Syria from becoming directly involved with their own forces in the southern region bordering on Israel.
On Vance's stop in Amman, King Hussein said Jordan "could not afford a failure" in a Geneva conference, and indicated that he was reluctant to commit Jordan to attend unless there was "some understanding of the principles on which we are going to base our talks" in Geneva.

During Vance's visit to Taif, the Saudi summer capital, the Saudis informed him that the PLO was moving toward accepting UN Resolution 242 if the United States made an appropriate reciprocal gesture to open a direct dialogue with the Palestinian group. The United States Government had already been in indirect contact with the PLO through meetings of congressmen, such as Lee Hamilton (D-Ind.), chairman of the House International Affairs Subcommittee on Europe and the Middle East, who had met with Arafat in Cairo in mid-July. Hamilton reported that he gained the impression that the PLO leader "accepts Israel" and would accept a Palestinian "mini-state," although Arafat did not say so explicitly.

According to highly placed Palestinian sources, Arafat had informed the Saudis that al-Fatah, the main Palestinian guerrilla group which he headed, would acquiesce in 242 if the resolution were "interpreted" as recognizing the right to create a Palestinian state. In transmitting the message to Secretary Vance, the Saudis reportedly modified it to read "independent homeland" instead of "state," presumably to make it appear more congruent with the Carter position.

The Carter Administration appeared at this time to be scaling down its requirements for opening discussions with the PLO. In an interview with Time magazine, published August 8, President Carter was asked whether Begin had said he would drop his opposition to any PLO participation in the Geneva Conference, if the PLO were to accept the principle of the existence of Israel. Carter said that Begin had objected to any identifiable PLO members attending such a conference because the PLO was publicly committed to Israel's destruction. The President went on to state: "I cannot speak for Mr. Begin, but if the Palestinian leaders adopted that position [acceptance of Israel's existence] or espoused the U.S. Resolutions 242 and 338 as a basis for negotiations at Geneva, we would immediately commence plans to begin talks with the Palestinian leaders." In an informal news conference in Plains, Georgia on August 8, the President reiterated his remarks to Time, and then noted that the PLO might add a unilateral statement to its acceptance of 242 to the effect that the Palestinians "have additional status other than as just refugees." Adding such a proviso, Carter said, "would suit us okay."

Speaking to newsmen in Taif, Secretary Vance said that he had been informed that the PLO was contemplating a change in its position, but noted that he had seen nothing concrete as yet. "If the PLO were to accept 242," Vance said, "they would be accepting the principle that they recognize the right of Israel to exist in a state of peace, within secure and recognized boundaries." Vance added: "That, in my judgment, would revoke the Covenant." This was a departure from Vance's earlier position, enunciated during his February trip, in which he had reiterated the traditional American position that the PLO would have to accept Israel's right to exist, recognize 242 and 338, and explicitly
renounce or formally amend its National Covenant before the United States would agree to deal with the organization.

In Israel, on August 13, Vance reportedly stated to a group of West Bank Arab dignitaries who had been brought together by Foreign Minister Dayan, that the United States considered a transition period under United Nations trusteeship as the most reasonable solution of the issue of a Palestinian homeland. Several West Bank mayors, who refused to meet with Vance, stressed their support for the PLO. Another group of West Bankers who did attend the Dayan reception for Vance asserted that the Arabs actually living in the area should have the right of self-determination.

On August 26, the PLO Central Council issued a hard-line statement condemning "all the United States and Zionist maneuvers" as plots aimed at liquidating the Palestinian cause. The statement again rejected UN Resolution 242. The PLO Council warned the "cowards" living "in occupied Palestine" against cooperating with the plans of the Zionist enemy, further warned against "giving credence to imperialist and Zionist promises," and urged instead a renewal of militancy and "confrontation." President Carter termed the statement "an obstacle in the way of our efforts to convene a peace conference."

**Palestinian Representation Issue**

On September 12, on the eve of Secretary Vance's scheduled series of meetings with the Israeli and Arab foreign ministers attending the UN General Assembly, the State Department issued a new policy statement on the Middle East. After reiterating that all participants at a renewed Geneva conference should adhere to the terms of Resolutions 242 and 338, the statement placed special emphasis on settling the question of "the status of the Palestinians" in a comprehensive Arab-Israeli agreement. Toward this end, the statement went on, "the Palestinians must be involved in the peacemaking process. Their representatives will have to be at Geneva for the Palestinian question to be solved." The statement did not make explicit reference to the PLO nor to the form of Palestinian representation. Nevertheless, PLO leader Arafat welcomed it as "a positive step." Secretary Vance, on September 14, said that the two alternatives which seemed most promising were Palestinians within a Jordanian delegation or Palestinians within a single pan-Arab delegation.

The always outspoken American Ambassador to the United Nations, Andrew Young, declared on September 18 that the PLO would have to be brought into the negotiations. "You're not going to have peace in the Middle East until the people who are doing the fighting are somehow brought to the table," he said, adding, however, that the PLO must first recognize "Israel's right to exist." He also recommended the holding of a plebiscite to determine if the PLO "is truly representative of the aspirations of the entire Palestinian people."
Following meetings between Foreign Minister Dayan and Secretary Vance, the Israeli Cabinet, on September 25, approved a proposal calling for a single unified Arab delegation, including Palestinians, to attend the opening session of a Geneva conference. The Palestinian Arabs, whom the Cabinet referred to as the “Arabs of Eretz Israel,” could not be known officials of the PLO, although they might be sympathizers of the organization. Moreover, Israel would not negotiate with the unified delegation as such; once the ceremonial session was over, the Arabs would have to be split into separate national delegations to negotiate peace agreements with Israel. The Cabinet decision left unclear whether the Palestinians would then become part of the Jordanian delegation, or could also be members of the Egyptian and possibly Syrian delegations as well.

The PLO gave a noncommittal response. A PLO spokesman in Beirut reiterated that the PLO was the “sole legitimate” representative of the Palestinian people, adding that after the PLO received “a formal invitation to Geneva,” then the organization would “consider the details of Palestinian representation there.”

At this news conference on September 29, President Carter also emphasized the need for “adequate Palestinian representation” at a peace conference. He reasserted the recent American position that the United States Government would “begin to meet with and work with the PLO” as soon as they accepted UN Resolution 242 as a basis for negotiations, even with the qualifying comment that they regarded the resolution as inadequately meeting Palestinian interests. Asked whether the United States regarded the PLO as a representative of the Palestinians, the President replied: “Obviously they don’t represent a nation. It is a group that represents certainly a substantial part of the Palestinians. I certainly don’t think they’re the exclusive representatives of the Palestinians. Obviously there are mayors, for instance, and local officials in the West Bank area who represent Palestinians. They may or may not be members of the PLO.”

**Soviet-American Joint Efforts**

At his September 29 press conference, Carter noted that “a further complicating factor” in preparing for Geneva was that the Soviet Union was a co-chairman. Therefore, in the call for the conference and in the negotiations preceding the format of the conference “we have to deal with the Soviet Union as well.” Intensive Soviet-American discussions, which had begun in August with a meeting between Secretary Vance and the Soviet Ambassador in Washington, Anatoly F. Dobrinin, were capped by a 90-minute meeting between Vance and Soviet Foreign Minister Andrei A. Gromyko in New York on September 30. On the following day, a joint Soviet-American statement on the Middle East was issued.

The statement began by declaring their agreement on the urgent necessity of achieving a just and lasting comprehensive settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict. Noting that some procedural and organizational problems remained, they pledged
through joint efforts and their contacts with the parties to facilitate the resumption of the Geneva Conference "not later than December 1977." The statement said that the questions to be resolved in a comprehensive settlement included "such key issues as withdrawal of Israeli armed forces from territories occupied in the 1967 conflict; the resolution of the Palestinian question, including insuring the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people; termination of the state of war and establishment of normal peaceful relations on the basis of mutual recognition of the principles of sovereignty, territorial integrity, and political independence."

The joint statement aroused a storm of controversy within the Congress, which had not been informed in advance, among the general American public, and in the Middle East. State Department officials explained that since the Russians were going to be at Geneva in any case, Secretary Vance believed it useful to develop a "common denominator" of agreed principles with them. The American negotiators claimed, moreover, to have won certain concessions from the Russians in the process of hammering out the joint statement. For instance, the Russians no longer demanded Israeli withdrawal from "all" or from "the" territories, and the Russians now endorsed the goal of normal peaceful relations and not merely an end of the state of belligerence.

On the Palestinian question, the statement omitted explicit reference to the Palestine Liberation Organization. However, it called for participation in the Geneva Peace Conference "of representatives of all the parties involved in the conflict, including those of the Palestinian people." The Israeli Government was also distressed by the fact that the United States, for the first time, agreed to support "the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people," whereas in the past the United States had limited herself to endorsing the legitimate interests of the Palestinians. State Department officials countered that they had won a concession from the Russians on this point as well, since in the past the Soviet Union had spoken of the legitimate national rights of the Palestinians. State Department officials also noted that the American position went no further than that of the nine-member European Economic Community, which on June 29, 1977 had adopted a statement affirming their belief that a solution of the Middle East conflict was possible "only if the legitimate right of the Palestinian people to give effective expression to its national identity" were translated into "a homeland for the Palestinian people."

From the Israeli perspective, however, the net result of all the Soviet-American semantic bargaining was to erode the solemn United States commitment to Israel on Palestinian participation in Geneva that had been given by former Secretary of State Kissinger to Israeli Foreign Minister Allon as part of the September 1, 1975 Sinai II Agreement (AJYB, 1977 [Vol. 77], pp. 91–92).

Most distressing to Israel was the fact that the joint Soviet-American statement made no explicit reference to either Resolution 242 or 338. The American explanation was that the Soviet Union had begun by asking for explicit endorsement of General Assembly resolutions that spelled out Palestinian rights, and the compromise solution was to drop reference to any United Nations resolutions. But seen in the context of the Carter Administration's efforts to bring the PLO into the Geneva
negotiations, the joint statement could be regarded as a face-saving device designed to enable the PLO to come to Geneva without having explicitly to endorse Resolution 242.

The American Jewish community was shocked and outraged by the joint Soviet-American statement. In a telegram to Secretary Vance, Rabbi Schindler of the President's Conference said the joint statement appeared to be "an abandonment of America's historic commitment to the security and survival of Israel" and "a shocking about-face" of the President's public pledges to support a negotiated settlement within the framework of Resolution 242. The joint statement initiated a wave of protest in the Jewish community that had been building over the months.

In the aftermath of the October 1 statement, the White House was, in fact, flooded with thousands of irate phone calls, telegrams, and letters. According to Washington observers, the vehemence and volume of the protest surprised the Administration, which had not foreseen the domestic consequences of the joint statement. Some of the political consequences, however, were immediately apparent to Los Angeles Democratic Party leaders, who reported that many normally stalwart Jewish supporters were refusing to buy tickets for a $1,000-a-plate, Democratic fund-raising dinner scheduled for October 22. "I have never seen them as upset by anything as they are now," Hershey Gold, a veteran Democratic fund-raiser, told the Los Angeles Times. State Department spokesman Hodding Carter III tried to mollify the opposition, saying that Palestinian rights were not to "be purchased at the expense of Israel" and that PLO endorsement of the joint statement would not in itself constitute "acceptance of our terms for talking to" the PLO.

The Israeli and American Jewish critics were joined by many prominent Americans, such as labor leader George Meany, who questioned the Administration's wisdom in enhancing the Soviet Union's role in the Middle East in the absence of any evidence that Moscow truly shared Washington's basic objectives of peace and stability in the area. The statement explicitly mentioned that in addition to demilitarized zones and the agreed stationing therein of UN troops or observers, "international guarantees of such borders as well as of the observance of the terms of the settlement can be established, should the parties so desire." The statement added that "the United States and the Soviet Union are ready to participate in these guarantees, subject to their constitutional processes."

Among members of Congress and their constituents, this raised the spectre of Syria or a PLO-dominated Palestinian entity calling in Soviet troops or "volunteers" to enforce its interpretation of its rights. The result could be open confrontation between Soviet and American forces. Or, if a post-Vietnam mood meant that an American Congress would block any firm response, the Russians or their Cuban surrogates could have the field to themselves, since Moscow was not subject to the same constraints in its "constitutional processes."

Senator Henry M. Jackson (D-Wash.) called the joint statement "a step in the wrong direction," noting that not only the Israelis were unhappy about reintroducing the Russians. "The American people must certainly raise the question: 'Why bring the Russians in at a time when the Egyptians have been throwing them out?'"
the Senator said. Jackson was also angered by the Administration's failure to consult Congress about the proposals for joint Soviet-American guarantees of the Arab-Israeli borders, pointing out that this "could mean the positioning of Russian and American troops" in the area, which was a mistaken policy since it would "raise issues of confrontation." Senator Robert J. Dole (R-Kans.) said the statement was an "abdication of Mideast leadership by President Carter." Senator Daniel P. Moynihan (D-N.Y.) charged that the joint statement was a sign of "escalating diplomatic pressure against Israel."

National Security Adviser Brzezinski took a more optimistic view. In an interview on Canadian television, Brzezinski said that the Soviet Union "realizes that the situation of continued conflict in the Middle East does not enhance its interests. It jeopardizes them locally and in terms of their relations with us." He expressed optimism that the Geneva Conference would be reconvened before the end of the year, and brushed aside Israeli objections. He expected Israel to attend the Conference, he said, since it did not want to be isolated and left out of the peace-making process. He also left no doubt that the United States was prepared to prod Israel to attend. "I think the point to bear in mind is that the United States is not just an interested bystander, not even just a benevolent mediator," he said. Since the United States "has a direct interest in obtaining a resolution of the conflict," he emphasized, "the U.S. has a legitimate right to exercise its own leverage" to obtain a settlement. "And that's exactly what we will be doing."

President Carter used a softer tone in his address to the UN General Assembly on October 4. "We do not intend to impose from the outside a settlement on the nations of the Middle East," the President said. He also reaffirmed the elements of peace outlined earlier and explicitly mentioned that the "basis for peace" was provided in Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338, adding that negotiations in good faith by all the parties were needed to give substance to peace. While declaring that the American commitment "to Israel's security is unquestionable," he again asserted that "the legitimate rights of the Palestinians must be recognized."

U.S.-Israel Working Paper

The Israeli Government made it clear that it regarded the Soviet-American joint statement as an unacceptable basis for negotiations. Foreign Minister Dayan carried with him a draft statement explaining why his government would not participate in the Geneva talks, as he began six hours of intensive discussions with President Carter and Secretary Vance on the night of October 4-5. Early in the morning, agreement was reached on a joint statement declaring that the United States and Israel agreed that Resolutions 242 and 338 "remain the agreed basis" for Geneva, and that "all the understandings and agreements between them on this subject remain in force." The statement also specified that "acceptance of the joint U.S.-U.S.S.R. statement of October 1, 1977 by the parties is not a prerequisite for the
This formulation enabled Israel to maintain that it regarded the Soviet-American statement as null and void, while the United States could say that it regarded the statement as valid. Dayan, Carter, and Vance also developed a working paper for resolving the procedural obstacles to Geneva, which Dayan was to submit to his government and Vance would present to the other parties.

On October 11, the Israeli Cabinet approved the "working paper," which provided that the Arab parties would be represented by a unified Arab delegation, "which will include Palestinian Arabs." After the opening session, the Conference would split into several working groups. The negotiation and conclusion of peace treaties would be by bilateral groups constituted on a geographic basis, i.e., Egypt-Israel, Jordan-Israel, Syria-Israel, and Lebanon-Israel, whenever Lebanon chose to join. West Bank and Gaza issues were to be discussed in a separate working group to consist of Israel, Jordan, Egypt, and the Palestinian Arabs. Solution of the problem "of the Arab refugees and of the Jewish refugees [would] be discussed in accordance with terms to be agreed upon." While American spokesmen had previously acknowledged that the reference in Resolution 242 to "a just settlement of the refugee problem" could apply to Jewish as well as to Arab refugees, the working paper marked the first time that the Jewish refugees from Arab countries were explicitly placed on a par with the Palestinian Arab refugees in a high-level American document. The working paper reiterated that 242 and 338 were the agreed basis for the Geneva talks, and that "all the initial terms of reference" of the Geneva Conference would remain in force, except as modified by agreement of the parties. Under these terms, Israel obtained the right to veto the participation by any additional state or other party, such as the PLO, in the negotiations. The working paper did not specify how the Palestinian Arabs to participate in Geneva were to be selected.

President Carter welcomed the Israeli Cabinet's approval of the working paper, and in an interview with news editors on October 14 again reassured Israel that any agreement would have to be voluntarily accepted and that he did not favor an independent Palestinian state.

Egyptian President Sadat suggested that the Palestinians might be represented in Geneva by noted American professors of Palestinian origin. Although several such persons were known to be close to the PLO ideologically, they had never participated in any terrorist actions and were, therefore, presumably acceptable to Israel. The Saudis, however, took a tougher line. Saudi Foreign Minister Prince Saud al-Faisal told the National Press Club in Washington, on October 26, that the PLO was "undeniably the legitimate representative of the Palestinian people." He also indicated uneasiness at the American eagerness to have the Geneva Conference begin as soon as procedural details had been arranged, without agreement on basic principles. While Prince Saud spoke of the need for a "peaceful settlement," he never explicitly endorsed Arab peace with Israel. In contrast to his relatively moderate tone in Washington, the Saudi foreign minister was quoted in an interview in the
Beirut newspaper *an-Nahar* as declaring that in case of a renewal of Arab-Israeli conflict, “not only will Saudi Arabia sacrifice its oil and financial resources, but also the blood of its sons.”

Damascus was adopting an equally hard line. Syrian Defense Minister Mustafa Tlas declared on Damascus radio on October 7 that Israel’s creation constituted an unprecedented act of aggression against the Arab nation, and this made it incumbent to wage a continuous struggle against the Zionists and their imperialist allies. “In revolutionary Syria, we will never extend our hand to shake the treacherous and criminal hand stained with the blood of our martyrs,” he declared. The official newspaper of Syria’s ruling Ba’ath Party announced on October 22 that “Syria is now taking the line of direct military confrontation with Israel,” since the dangers of the “military option are considerably less than the dangers of submitting to ambiguous settlements that bestow legitimacy on Zionist occupation.” Meanwhile, the PLO continued its unwillingness to send an unambiguous signal of readiness to abandon its objective of Israel’s dissolution.

**The Sadat Initiative**

On November 9, President Sadat delivered a lengthy address at the opening of the fall session of the People’s Assembly in Cairo. He reviewed the activities to prepare for resumption of the Geneva Conference, and noted his personal efforts to coordinate the Egyptian position with the leaders of Saudi Arabia, Syria, Jordan, and the PLO. He pointed out that he had met earlier in the day with Yasir Arafat, “a dear brother and a splendid comrade in struggle.”

After tracing the procedural wrangles over the details of the working paper, Sadat expressed his disdain for procedural details. He said that the Israelis were raising procedural obstacles so that the Arabs should “have a nervous breakdown” or “suffer a fit” and declare that they were not going to Geneva. This would put the onus on the Arabs for the failure of peace. Sadat said he would unmask the Israeli tactic, saying, “I agree to any procedural process.” He was determined to go to Geneva, he said, because “neither Israel nor the powers of the world can dissuade me from what I want—the Arab territory occupied in 1967 and the rights of the Palestinian people, including their right to establish their state.”

Noting that his speech was being broadcast for all the Egyptian people and the Arab nation to hear, Sadat then dropped his bombshell: “I am ready to go to the ends of the earth if this will prevent a soldier or an officer of my sons from being wounded—not being killed, but wounded. Israel will be astonished when it hears me saying now before you that I am ready to go to their house, to the Knesset itself and to talk to them.”

Prime Minister Begin responded the following day, welcoming Sadat’s offer and declaring that the Egyptian leader would be received with all honor when he came to Israel. An official invitation was extended by the Knesset, and was transmitted
to Sadat via the American ambassadors in Tel Aviv and Cairo. (For details of the Sadat visit to Israel, see Louvish, pp. 271-274.)

The dramatic Sadat initiative took American officials by surprise, even though President Carter had earlier in the year tried to encourage some direct contact between Sadat and Begin. American officials were at first privately skeptical that anything would result from the Sadat visit, and were fearful that his "high risk" undertaking would further divide the Arab world and scuttle the chances for the Geneva Conference that the United States had been laboring so intensively to bring about. Aside from these policy considerations there was apparently also a certain measure of pique at having been upstaged by the Egyptian president. Indeed, there was some evidence that Sadat's action was prompted by dissatisfaction with American policy—particularly the re-introduction of the Russians, after Sadat had worked hard to eliminate them from Egypt, and the American efforts to satisfy the difficult demands of the fence-sitting Syrians—which had convinced Sadat that the Geneva Conference would never get started unless he took matters into his own hands.

Whatever the reasons, for several crucial days while opposition was mounting in the Arab world, the United States Government refrained from publicly endorsing the Egyptian move. It was only on November 16 that President Carter declared that Sadat's "unprecedented" decision was "very courageous" and "a step in the right direction." The Administration did not relinquish its hopes for a Geneva conference, and was careful to avoid any impression that it favored the idea of a separate Egyptian-Israeli agreement. This was implicit in Carter's comment that he believed that Sadat's visit to Jerusalem "will be a constructive step toward a general conference that will let the hopes for Middle Eastern peace come closer to realization."

Despite Egyptian and American assertions that Sadat was not seeking a separate peace and was presenting all the Arab and Palestinian demands to Israel, virulent opposition to Sadat was mounting in the Arab world. The position of the rejectionists, such as Libya and Iraq, could have been predicted. However, the United States was particularly concerned about the prominent anti-Sadat stand taken by the Syrians, who were ostensibly committed to a peaceful solution. A personal visit by Sadat to Damascus on November 16 failed to convince Assad to endorse the pending Egyptian trip to Jerusalem. On the contrary, Damascus proclaimed a day of national mourning, and Syrian official statements labelled Sadat a "traitor," a "dupe," and a "capitulationist."

President Carter was only mildly critical of the Syrian position in an ABC news interview on November 20. He explained that the Syrians had been the most difficult because they were in the most difficult position, since they were no match for Egypt or Israel in military strength. "But they are the tie between the moderate Arab world and the Arab world that still is perhaps most radical." Carter added that he believed Assad, whom he recalled meeting in Geneva, "genuinely wants peace," but "he has become kind of a spokesman in a strange way for some of the more radical Arab leaders" who did not want to move toward recognition of Israel. Carter expressed
the hope that the Sadat visit might break the Arab psychological barrier against recognizing Israel, adding that it was "obvious that President Assad doesn't want to see Syria left out of the future negotiations." The Syrians feared a separate bilateral Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty. Since neither he (Carter) nor Sadat nor Begin wanted a separate peace, the President expressed confidence that a Geneva conference would become possible once the rest of the Arabs were reassured that there was no danger of their "being abandoned by the strong nation of Egypt."

On his trip to the Middle East in early December, the Secretary of State extracted public declarations from Sadat and Begin affirming that they were not planning a separate deal. Nevertheless, the United States proved unable to convince any of the other Arab states, including the ostensibly moderate pro-Western Jordanians and Saudis, to participate in the conference that Sadat sought to convene in Cairo. Morocco and the Sudan, both friendly to Sadat and geographically removed from the Arab-Israeli conflict, were the only Arab League members openly to support the Egyptian initiative. A rejectionist summit was convened by Colonel Qaddafi in Tripoli. The Iraqis, perennially feuding with Syria, left the conference before the end, because it was not sufficiently militant for them. The other participants from Syria, Libya, South Yemen, Algeria, the PLO, and the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine issued a declaration terming the Sadat initiative "high treason" and decided on the "freezing of political and diplomatic relations" with Cairo. Israel was referred to only as "occupied Palestine," and Sadat was lambasted for allying himself with the "Zionist-imperialist enemy." In addition, the Palestinian groups issued their own communiqué rejecting "all international conferences based on UN Resolutions 242 and 338, including Geneva."

Egypt responded by breaking diplomatic relations with the five Arab states that had attended the Tripoli conference. Sadat also recalled the Egyptian ambassador from Moscow, blaming the Russians for the divisions in the Arab world and for instigating the "rubbish" at the Tripoli conference through their "vicious" policy.

The United States took a more restrained public stance toward the Russians, despite Moscow statements accusing the U.S. of conspiring with Egypt and Israel to foil the Geneva Conference. Vance said on December 6 that some recent Soviet statements "have not been helpful," and raised questions about "what their ultimate objectives are." Undersecretary of State Philip C. Habib was dispatched to Moscow to urge Soviet authorities to cool their opposition to the Sadat initiative, and to ask the Russians to influence the Syrians in not joining the rejectionists. Habib returned to Washington empty-handed.

This resulted in a revision of the American policy of cooperation with Moscow signaled in the October 1 joint statement. National Security Adviser Brzezinski outlined the new American approach on ABC's Issues and Answers on December 11. In an attempt to fit the new realities created by the Sadat initiative into a conceptual framework, Brzezinski spoke of three concentric circles. Beginning with the inner circle of an Egyptian-Israeli settlement, U.S. policy would move outward
to the intermediate circle and seek an accord among Israel, "the moderate Palestini-
ans," and Jordan regarding the West Bank. Finally, the United States would move
to encourage an Israeli-Syrian agreement as part of a comprehensive settlement.
This could be confirmed with Soviet participation at a Geneva conference, with
possible American and Soviet guarantees of the overall settlement. The Russians
were thus being relegated once again to a subsidiary role at a later stage in the
negotiations. As for the United States, Washington officials made it clear that the
Carter Administration would not adopt a "passive posture," but intended actively
"to engage in shaping the process" of peace negotiations.

Prime Minister Begin flew to Washington in mid-December to present his peace
plan to the President before conveying it to Sadat in Ismailia on December 25.
President Carter termed the Israeli proposals "constructive" and a "fair basis for
negotiation." However, Begin was privately told by American officials that the plan
was unlikely to be accepted by Sadat in its initial form. Following the Ismailia
meeting, the State Department issued a statement saying the United States was
"pleased" that the two sides had agreed to continue the substantive discussions
through the establishment of a military committee to meet in Cairo and a political
committee to meet in Jerusalem. "Establishing a negotiating framework for a com-
prehensive settlement will be one of the important items on the agenda in the weeks
ahead," the statement concluded.

Not only did the United States continue to support the idea of a comprehensive
settlement, but it was careful to distance itself from the Begin proposals. Accompa-
nying President Carter on his end-of-the-year trip to Europe, Asia, and the Middle
East, Secretary Vance emphasized to reporters, while in Warsaw on December 29,
that although the Carter Administration believed Israel's proposals for the West
Bank were an appropriate start for negotiations, the United States had not endorsed
the plan. During the following months, the United States was to exert influence on
Israel to "be more forthcoming" regarding a statement of principles on the future
status of the West Bank and the ultimate role of the Palestinians.

George E. Gruen
The Belgrade Conference

Background

The first official meeting arranged in compliance with the follow-up provisions of the 1975 Helsinki Final Act (technically, the Final Act of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe) was held in Belgrade over a period of 27 weeks, from October 4, 1977 to March 10, 1978 (see AJYB, 1978 [Vol. 78], pp. 121–145). Two days before the close of the conference, the 35 participating nations (the NATO allies, the Warsaw Pact countries, Finland, Switzerland, Yugoslavia, and the Holy See) adopted a final document reflecting the inconclusive character of the proceedings.

The signers of the Final Act had committed themselves to implementing its provisions unilaterally, bilaterally, and multilaterally. On the multilateral level, they had agreed to work toward “the deepening of mutual relations, the improvement of security, and the development of the process of détente in the future.” A “thorough exchange of views on the implementation” of the various provisions was called for in the accord. Toward this end, it was agreed that periodic follow-up meetings would be held, with the first taking place in Belgrade in 1977. The Belgrade Conference was to be governed by the same procedures that applied at Helsinki; each nation was to have an equal voice, and decisions were to be reached by consensus.

A group of American and West European legal experts meeting in Strasbourg, France in June 1977 agreed that the Final Act, while not a treaty, did have important implications for international law. The Final Act, in their view, legitimated peaceful political action among the signatory nations in seeking information from one another about implementation of the Helsinki accord, and in demanding compliance with its provisions. This applied with particular force to Principle 7 and Basket 3, the human rights provisions.

Both the Communist and the Western nations came to Belgrade with specific objectives in mind. The former, having rendered themselves vulnerable by their human rights commitments at Helsinki, sought to avoid being placed “in the dock” at Belgrade. Toward this end, the Soviet Union employed a variety of tactics, including charging Western critics with interfering in Soviet affairs, threatening to retaliate with counter-charges of Western human rights violations, and diverting attention from the question of past compliance by focusing on proposals for future activities in other areas, such as energy, environment, and transport. On April 25, 1977, Tass, the official Soviet news agency, editorialized that the Conference “must
be oriented to the future... Proposals by some Western politicians and press organs to amend or make more specific the wording of individual concrete formulations of the Final Act containing important accords, whether concerning measures toward stronger trust or in questions of humanitarian cooperation, are without substance. The Belgrade meeting is not empowered to revise even a single letter in the Final Act."

The Western nations, for their part, were determined to press for a reaffirmation of the Helsinki human rights commitment, and for a detailed review of compliance—while avoiding confrontation, if possible. They also sought to secure agreement for yet another review meeting. The United States, reflecting congressional sentiment and public expectations, inclined to a tougher stance regarding Communist violations than did other Western nations. In an interview in February 1977, Arthur Goldberg, the head of the United States delegation to the Belgrade Conference, stated that the U.S. “had to speak out honestly to maintain its credibility” and to give “hope to dissenters in Prague and the Soviet Union.” Britain, France, and West Germany generally preferred a more cautious approach, with public exchanges limited to generalities, and particular cases dealt with behind the scenes. This was also the view of the neutral and non-aligned nations.

Dissident groups in Eastern Europe, acting on the basis of Principle 7, which confirmed “the right of the individual to know and act upon his rights and duties,” undertook to monitor their governments’ compliance with the Helsinki accord. They did so in the hope of influencing world public opinion, which, in turn, might be brought to bear on the various Communist regimes. One of the most active of these groups was the Moscow-based Group to Promote the Observance of the Helsinki Agreement in the USSR, whose members, in an appeal dated November 21, 1977, called upon the Western nations to “be absolutely firm and decisive” in dealing with Soviet human rights violations. Similar appeals were made by three other Soviet dissident groups—the Christian Committee to Defend the Rights of Believers in the USSR, the Working Commission to Investigate the Abuse of Psychiatry for Political Purposes, and the Free Adventists. Soviet authorities responded to the activities of the monitoring groups by arresting their leaders. Twenty human rights activists were taken into custody; two others, travelling abroad on Soviet passports, were stripped of their citizenship and denied the right to return.

In Czechoslovakia, in October 1977, representatives of Charter 77, a dissident group, issued a statement calling on President Gustav Husak to honor the Final Act. They called attention to the harassment of Charter 77 members, and to various other human rights violations. In Poland, in June 1977, a Worker’s Defense Committee appealed to the Belgrade participants to act against the arrest of Committee members and other human rights violations. In Rumania, several individuals signed an appeal to Belgrade delegates calling for an investigation of the human rights situation in their country.

In June 1977, the Yugoslav government expelled a group of Jewish women (the "35 Group") who had come to Belgrade from 13 Western countries to demonstrate for the rights of Soviet Jews. The demonstrators were prevented from handing out leaflets accusing the Soviet Union of non-compliance with the Helsinki human rights provisions. Five groups of West European parliamentarians of various political orientations visited Belgrade during the course of the Conference to lobby on behalf of Soviet Jews. During the early days of the Conference, a group of more than 100 Jewish activists from nine Soviet cities released a public letter charging Soviet authorities with numerous violations of the Final Act, and pointing to an official antisemitic policy.

The Conference Proceedings

REVIEW OF PAST COMPLIANCE

A contentious atmosphere surrounded the Belgrade Conference from the outset. Arthur Goldberg, in his opening statement, indicated that not enough progress had been made in fulfilling the Helsinki accord. He pointed to shortcomings in several areas, including the jamming of broadcasts, the failure to reunite divided families, the persecution of dissidents, and the harassment of monitoring groups. The Soviet delegate responded with a vigorous defense of his country's human rights record, and warned of the dire consequences for the Conference if confrontation became the order of the day. As the Conference unfolded, the United States and Soviet Union clashed repeatedly over the question of how specific the review of the human rights situation should be. The Soviet Union insisted throughout that a discussion of particulars was precluded by the principle of nonintervention. The U.S. and other Western nations, with varying degrees of conviction, insisted that a serious review had to deal with specifics.
The review of the Final Act proceeded paragraph by paragraph, beginning with the Declaration on Principles Guiding Relations Between Participating States. The Soviet Union, as expected, stressed Principles 1, 3, and 6, relating to sovereignty, the inviolability of frontiers, and nonintervention. The Western nations, for their part, emphasized Principle 7, dealing with "respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, including the freedom of thought, conscience, religion, or belief." The debate on Principle 7 was the most acrimonious, with the U.S. insisting that governmental respect for it was a precondition for meaningful détente. In this connection, Arthur Goldberg cited by name three leading Soviet dissidents—Anatoly Shcharansky, Yuri Orlov, and Aleksandr Ginzburg—who had been arrested on charges of anti-Soviet activity, as well as several Czechs tried for belonging to Charter 77.

The review of Basket 3, "Cooperation in Humanitarian and Other Fields," with its four sections on contacts, information, culture, and education, evoked considerable controversy. The Soviet Union and other East European nations praised their own records of implementation in regard to human contacts, offering statistical evidence on the number of inter-governmental agreements signed. The Western nations, especially the United States, focused on the plight of individuals, with reference to such matters as obstacles to family reunification, the denial of visas on grounds of state security, and the harassment of applicants for exit visas.

Two forceful statements on "contacts" were made by U.S. delegates Sol C. Chaikin and Professor Joyce Hughes. Both accused the Soviet Union of violating the Universal Postal Convention by failing to deliver George Meany's invitation to Andrei Sakharov to address the AFL-CIO annual convention in Los Angeles. They also pointed to impediments placed in the way of Sakharov's New York publisher, Random House, when the latter attempted to correspond with him directly. The Soviet delegates countered the charges by asserting that U.S. customs and postal officials opened many thousand pieces of mail each year.

The discussion on "information" highlighted fundamental differences in East-West philosophy. The Communist delegates emphasized that journalists and other disseminators of information were obligated by the Final Act to contribute to developing mutual understanding and improved relations among the participating states, and that governments had the right to make them conform to this purpose. The Western delegates stated that their countries did not wish to control the dissemination of information, and that the free flow of information, in itself, contributed to understanding. The Soviet delegate attacked Radio Liberty and Radio Free Europe for interfering in the internal affairs of the Communist bloc nations, while the U.S. protested the expulsion and harassment of American journalists.

In discussing "culture and education," the Communist delegates cited statistics showing that the nations of Eastern Europe imported more books, films, and other cultural materials from the West than vice versa. Western delegates
replied that in their countries cultural activities were not controlled by the government, and that imported cultural material had to compete with domestic works. The U.S. called for fuller opportunities for exchange scholars and researchers to have access to archives and other facilities. They also criticized the obstacles that were placed in the way of collaboration between Eastern and Western scientists.

NEW PROPOSALS

In addition to reviewing past compliance with the Helsinki provisions, the Western and Eastern bloc nations put forward proposals involving both matters of principle and specific undertakings. Some of the proposals were intended for inclusion in the final document, while others were suggested for adoption as separate resolutions.

While the Western proposals touched upon military or cultural matters related to Baskets 1 and 2, they were concerned primarily with the human rights and humanitarian issues connected with Principle 7 and Basket 3. One proposal affirmed the right of private organizations and individuals to monitor governmental compliance with the Final Act. Another called upon the Helsinki signers to guarantee "freedom of thought, conscience, religion, or belief." Among the many proposals dealing with ways of facilitating contacts between people were those calling for reduced costs for transnational family visits, limits on travel document fees, the issuance of passports that would be valid for five years of unrestricted travel, and speedy consideration of family reunification applications.

With respect to information gathering and dissemination, the Western nations proposed, among other things, that foreign journalists be permitted to import reference material needed for the practice of their profession; that they "not be expelled, or otherwise acted against, as a result of news or opinions published or broadcast in the media they represent"; and that foreign press associations be established "to facilitate cooperation among journalist members, and between them and the authorities of the host country, for the purpose of a better exercise of their profession."

The Communist bloc proposals were in a quite different vein, carefully avoiding human rights issues. Thus, the Soviet Union and its allies called for special conferences on energy, the environment, transportation, and the restoration of historical and cultural monuments. Bulgaria proposed exchanges and contacts among manual workers, meetings on youth issues, and wider cooperation in the area of sports. Rumania called for a freeze on military budgets, and various pan-European youth activities. Czechoslovakia called for a prohibition against the abuse of the mass information media for "propaganda in favor of war, violence, and hatred among people."
ARAB-ISRAEL DISPUTE

The Final Act had declared the intention of the signatory nations “to promote the development of good, neighborly relations with the non-participating Mediterranean states.” Malta, with the support of Yugoslavia and Cyprus, sought an active role for the non-European Mediterranean nations in the Belgrade Conference, and looked toward the discussion of political and security issues related to the area. The U.S. and other Western nations, anxious to keep the Arab-Israel dispute from coming up as a subject of discussion, insisted on limiting their participation. However, a number of Arab states which had received observer status used the opportunity to attack Israel. Egypt, Syria, Algeria, and Lebanon introduced the usual anti-Israel themes and rhetoric. The PLO, through its office in Belgrade, lobbied with delegations to encourage the discussion of Mediterranean political issues. They also tried to obtain authorization to address the Conference directly, but a Soviet supporting motion was blocked by Western delegations. Israel, also an observer at Belgrade, spoke of the help it could provide in the areas of agriculture, science, and tourism, and focused on Soviet harassment of Jews seeking to emigrate.

THE FINAL DOCUMENT

As the Conference moved toward an inconclusive culmination, some observers, such as the Yugoslav dissident writer Mihajlo Mihajlov, argued that it would be better to adopt no final document than to adopt one that made no reference to human rights. In a public plea to the Conference delegates, Mihajlov argued: “The abdication regarding strict defense of human rights would mean an end to détente, reinforcement of totalitarianism, and the first step toward European war. It would be better to dissolve the Helsinki agreement than for the world to lose faith in all agreements and declarations.” This view, however, did not prevail.

Soviet obstructionism and the rule of consensus made it inevitable that the final document, based on a Danish draft, would disappoint Western expectations. Not only did it add nothing to the text of the Final Act with regard to human rights, but it did not even reiterate any of the human rights principles or undertakings already contained in that document. At most, it did so indirectly, in emphasizing the dependence of détente on implementation of the Final Act, and in repeating the “resolve” of the participating states “to implement fully, unilaterally, bilaterally and multilaterally all the provisions of the Final Act.” The final document noted that the exchange of views at Belgrade was an important contribution to achieving the aims of the Helsinki accord, even though views differed as to the degree of implementation achieved so far. It noted the resolve of the participating states to hold further meetings, with the next one scheduled for Madrid in November 1980. Note was also taken of the decision to hold a series of sessions to deal with such matters as the peaceful settlement of disputes (Bonn, June 1978); scientific cooperation
The White House reacted to the final document with the following statement: "We regret that the Soviet Union failed to permit the conference to proceed to its proper conclusion. We intend to press the Soviet Union to fulfill its commitment to respect human rights." Arthur Goldberg, in his final plenary statement, declared that the United States was determined to pursue the many ideas proposed in vain for inclusion in the final document. In the weeks following the Belgrade Conference, the United States made clear its intention to continue to utilize the Final Act as a yardstick and goad in its relationships with the East European countries, particularly the Soviet Union. Thus, on June 6, the U.S. Helsinki Commission released a study of the treatment of 22 Soviet dissidents, members of Helsinki monitoring groups, who since February 1977 had been imprisoned, stripped of their citizenship, and in other ways punished on various criminal charges. The study pointed out that Soviet authorities had broken their own laws by conducting improper searches, prolonging pre-trial detentions, and denying the defendants their procedural rights.

Evaluations

Opinions in the West varied as to the significance of the Belgrade Conference. If the test of success was a Soviet acknowledgment of wrongdoing, then the Conference was clearly a failure. Pessimists were confirmed in their view by the crackdown on dissidents in the Soviet Union and other East European countries. Some Western and neutral observers attributed the failure of the Belgrade Conference to achieve more to the tactics of the American delegation, which they viewed as too polemical and intended for public applause back home rather than solid accomplishment at the Conference. Other observers maintained that the outcome of the Conference was a foregone conclusion once Soviet authorities recognized the seriousness of their error in agreeing to the Helsinki accord. In this view, Belgrade simply highlighted the fundamental differences between Communist and Western human rights philosophies, and no refinements in U.S. or Western tactics could have yielded a more favorable outcome.

Optimistic commentators saw as a major success the fact that human rights had been the central issue at the Belgrade Conference, and that the Soviet Union and its allies had been subjected to continuing and particularized criticism on this score. The optimists also argued that the events of the months preceding the Conference had to be taken into account in evaluating the Belgrade meeting. During this period Western and Communist governments had assembled an unprecedented mass of documentation on human rights, and private groups had been encouraged to undertake protest activities. Finally, the optimists maintained that the Belgrade participants had affirmed either explicitly or implicitly a number of important principles: that human rights are a matter of legitimate international concern; that human
rights are an important aspect of the agenda of East-West diplomacy; that détente and peace depend on the just conduct of nations toward each other and their own citizens; and that the human rights provisions of the Final Act cannot be ignored, while other aspects of the agreement are honored.

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