

N.Y. ACCLAIMS MENACHEM BEGIN

By David Horowitz

UNITED NATIONS (WUP) -- "I bring you good tidings from Washington, from The White House and from Capital Hill."

With these opening words of hope, Prime Minister Menachem Begin was welcomed by a rousing standing ovation of some 2,200 guests attending a State of Israel Bonds dinner at the Waldorf - Astoria Hotel last week.

Mr. Begin and his aides arrived at the heavily-guarded hotel directly from Washington. "Before I arrived in the United States," Begin stated, "quite a number of people were apprehensive about a confrontation with Washington. The only confrontation I had," he emphasized, "was with the heat."

"The former Irgun hero then went on to reveal how he had established "a personal good rapport with the President" whom he found to be "a man of a good heart, a man of extraordinary intelligence and capable of taking decisions."

He spoke of what he termed "a moving ceremony on the White House lawn where, he said, he had been "greatly impressed by Carter's personality, much more so than any of the dignitaries I have ever met in my world travels."

The Prime Minister disclosed that prior to his arrival in the United States, the President had made it his business to read his book about the underground days, "The Revolt," which had given Carter the personal history of Begin's trials and tribulations in his struggle for Jewish self-determination.

He noted that in a State Department communique, the U.S. had noted that Washington "will continue to be committed to the survival of Israel." He proposed that the term "survival" should not be used. He suggested that the words "well-being" replace "survival." "Survival of Israel," Begin had insisted, "is up to us and cannot be depended upon outsiders."

The dynamic Prime Minister, who addressed the spellbound audience in perfect English, weighing each word carefully, spoke with some emotion about two "nocturnal private meetings" he had had with Jimmy Carter without anyone else being present during which they had both opened their hearts in an amiable exchange of views. "The President," he said, "was deeply impressed with the account I gave him of the life and death struggle of the Jewish people for self-determination through the centuries culminating in the Holocaust and British infamy."

"After our first nocturnal talk," Begin declared, "I went back to Blair House, and, for the first time in many nights, I slept like a child."

He said that the second nocturnal talk had given him equal satisfaction. "I left the President with a promise from him that all of Israel's security needs would be met now and in the future -- despite some differences."

He further revealed that during one of these nocturnal talks, he had presented the President with "an amazing document" which cited some basic facts pointing to the vital contributions Israel had made to the national security of the United States.

"The momentum for peace is here," Begin stated, "and we have now gone on record that we want peace, a real peace, a treaty, through direct negotiations."

Sam Rothberg, chairman of the State of Israel Bonds, introduced Begin with a glowing tribute.

"This is a dramatic moment in Jewish history," Rothberg declared. "It is with pride that we welcome his Excellency Menachem Begin on his first official visit to the U.S. as the Prime Minister of the State of Israel. Menachem Begin occupies a unique place in the founding of Israel, and he stands before us today as the symbol of the heroic leadership in the struggle for independence and as the spokesman for a new destiny for the Jewish people."

This writer, who has known Mr. Begin for some 25 years and often visited his home in Tel Aviv for Sabbath tea, greeted him as he left the dais with a warm handshake. "My good friend, David," he said.

The next day, Friday, July 22, Mr. Begin met with Secretary - General Kurt Waldheim for about one hour. Their discussion revolved around the Prime Minister's talks with President Carter on the reconvening of the Geneva conference. Dr. Waldheim, too, was deeply impressed with him.

Earlier in the day, he had breakfast with the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations.

It became clear from Menachem Begin's American visit, that he has lit a new torch of inspiration and hope for the future welfare of Israel and Jewry in general.

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