

WASHINGTON DATELINE

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ISRAELITE'S WHITE HOUSE CORRESPONDENT

CAMP DAVID, Md. Would you consider arranging a White House Summit with Prime Minister Begin and President Sadat?

I asked this question of President Carter last April in an interview to mark Israel's 30th anniversary.

The President was quick to reply: "I'd love for them to get together in a summit, yes. But it doesn't matter where they meet-- here in the White House, at Camp David or any other place. I talked to both of them about getting together. But, I don't want to build up false hopes by insinuating to you that I can issue an order, or even an invitation that both Premier Begin and President Sadat would respond to."

"They are quite independent. And apparently, each of them overestimates my influence on the other," he added. "My influence on Premier Begin is much less than President Sadat thinks it is. My influence on President Sadat is much less than Premier Begin thinks it is."

Indeed, the Egyptian and Israeli leaders did accept President Carter's invitation and the Middle East Summit has been in full swing since September 6. But we may never know just how much influence President Carter is having, or has had, on either Begin or Sadat.

President Carter described each as a "strong personality, with deep feelings, as well as major domestic political concerns which they must take into account."

Therefore, he added, that while the U.S. can provide a channel of communications, and has, at times, had some slight influence, "I have no control over either of them."

President Carter also told me that in cases of many leaders, their "public position is much more hard and intransigent than is their private position. Everyone is reluctant to yield through a public statement some bargaining position that might be traded for equivalent concessions on the other side."

"If a peace agreement appears close, there might be considerably more 'give' than public statements would indicate...."

He also acknowledged that if there was to be an agreement, it could be made only by the parties involved. "I prefer that Prime Minister Begin and President Sadat deal with each other directly without having to depend on the U.S. to assume the time-consuming and frustrating job of serving as an intermediary," he said.

And this is the very strategy that governed Carter's behavior during the Summit. Presidential spokesman Jody Powell said Carter has mostly been a passive contributor. "He is spending a great part of his time listening to the other parties," Powell stated.

The Summit brought Anwar Sadat to Camp David for the second time. He enjoyed the Maryland retreat last February when he and his wife, Jehan, were guests of the Carters.

It was the first visit for Menachem Begin and his wife, Aliza. Since Mrs. Sadat did not accompany her husband on this historic trip, Mrs. Carter and Mrs. Begin had the chance of becoming better acquainted. The Carters personally showed the Begins the scenic and spacious grounds and even hiked through the 134-acre wooded camp for more than one hour with them.

Once -- between meetings -- President Carter, in a gesture of comradeship, brought Premier Begin to the tennis courts to watch a doubles match between Secretary of State Cyrus Vance and U.S. Ambassador to Israel, Sam Lewis, and National Security Adviser Zbigniew Brzezinski and his aide, Bill Quandt.

In the past there had been some delicate talk that President Carter had publicly demonstrated a personal preference toward President Sadat. However, during the events I witnessed at Camp David there was a genuine feeling of friendship and warmth toward Premier Begin as well.

On one occasion, for example, President Carter sat between Begin and Sadat during a 45-minute traditional dress parade by Marines. He exchanged whispers and chat-chat with both men, once putting his arm around Sadat's shoulders and once affectionately patting Begin on the back.

When the colorful sunset ceremony concluded, the three leaders stood on a platform to review the Marines. Afterwards, each leader, followed by Secretary of State Vance, Vice President Mondale, and Dr. Brzezinski signed the book. President Carter wrote: "You all made our country

proud."

President Sadat wrote: "It was wonderful."

Premier Begin wrote: "It was a great performance of a great army. In deep appreciation for the famous Marines."

The three Summit principles and their delegations then attended a special reception hosted by Kosályn and Jimmy Carter in one of the lodges named Holly.

Countless words have been spoken and written about the hunger and thirst for an instant account of what goes on behind the Camp David gates. After observing and listening to newsmen and the average citizen alike, I find it is not the public who wants, and needs, an hour by hour progress report on the Summit. It is the newsmen who are impatient and who perceive it to be in the "national interest" that they be minutely informed.

Nonetheless, wait they must and wait they did. For me, it was well worth the wait, as well as the tenacity. A chance "hello" brought a momentary hurried quote from one of the participants in the negotiations:

"Things will turn out good here at Camp David...."

JERUSALEM (WNS) -- Steve Hilmes, 31, who resided in Los Angeles before immigrating to Israel in 1973 and joined the Jerusalem bomb disposal squad, died September 9 of injuries he sustained September 5 when an explosive device he was examining at a propane gas storage depot here went off.

NEW YORK -- A 24-page illustrated booklet entitled "A Jewish Travellers Guide to Brazil," has been published by Varig Brazilian Airlines to help travellers see this dynamic country and its active Jewish community.

WASHINGTON -- B'nai B'rith has praised Senator Edward Kennedy's successful intercession on behalf of eighteen Soviet families seeking to reunite with their relatives in the U.S. and Israel.

MONTREAL (WNS) -- The American people will not be willing to support any peace plan which Israel will consider as a mortal danger, Sen. Jacob Javits (R. NY) told a solidarity dinner at the Shaar Hashomayim Synagogue.

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