

WASHINGTON

BY TRUDE B. FELDMAN
ISRAELITE'S WHITE HOUSE CORRESPONDENT



WASHINGTON, D.C. -- Menachem Begin is now back in Jerusalem after his eighth visit to Washington since the Israeli Prime Minister and Jimmy Carter both took office in 1977. No prime minister or president of any country has been hosted at the White House eight times in so short a period.

In the midst of two days of extensive talks on remaining issues in the autonomy negotiations, on global security and the total Middle East situation, President and Mrs. Carter hosted an elaborate and 'heimishe' State Dinner in honor of Begin and his wife, Aliza.

The Carters took extraordinary steps to accommodate the Begins and other guests who observe the Jewish dietary laws by serving a kosher meal in the White House. Under the supervision of the Orthodox Rabbinical Council of Washington, the menu included cold Columbia River salmon; roast duckling with glazed peaches; wild rice, fresh asparagus, mixed green salad, and frozen orange sherbert cake with Grand Marnier sauce.

Rabbi Samuel Kawior, the supervisor, was in the White House pantry and kitchen throughout the preparation and serving of the entire meal. He saw that the kitchen was made kosher prior to the banquet.

During dinner, Begin turned to his wife -- who, in the excitement of the moment, was eating lightly -- and quipped: "This is an appetizing meal and you should eat more of it."

Then Begin teased Carter. "This meal is so delicious. Perhaps you might want to eat kosher food more often." The President laughed heartily.

I was seated at table number one, as was Dr. Yosef Burg, Israeli Minister of Interior. He said he was truly impressed with the exchange of 'toasts' and the warmth which permeated the evening. "The President and Mrs. Carter went all out to make us feel at home here tonight," he added, "and we're really grateful, especially at a time when he has so many other matters on his mind."

"This is an historic house and the friendship that binds our two countries, and the achievements of this statesman, make a confluence of both pleasure and history."

Carter added that the Camp David Accord, "carefully hammered out" between Premier Begin and President Sadat is "still the binding document under which we are presently engaged in further pursuit of peace."

"Israel," Carter noted, "has already withdrawn from more than two-thirds of the Sinai. And in a time when oil is particularly precious, has relinquished oil wells that were acknowledged Egyptian territory, but were developed by and discovered by Israel. We have guaranteed Israel to meet her needs for oil in the future if her supply should be interrupted."

Carter concluded by saying he believes that Jerusalem should be undivided, and that all should have access to the worship places there.

Premier Begin spoke at length about the Holocaust and its aftermath and meaning. He also touched on the upcoming negotiations, which will be led by his Minister of Interior, Josef Burg.

"We now face difficulties," Begin said, "but we shall solve them. We want to do so by May 26, as we promised each other, as a goal, not as a deadline. We believe in lifelines, not in deadlines."

"Before I came here, there were rumors that pressure would be exerted on me. But after many hours of talks, no confrontation took place. We looked for solutions and formulations and all the brains worked; and on both sides, sat some brainy people who did their best. So there is hope that we may meet the date. But if we don't, the sky is not on our heads and we shall continue negotiating until we reach agreement."

Menachem Begin was in high spirits throughout the evening. In the Blue Room, he made small talk as he was photographed with a number of the guests.

He told me it was an exhilarating event and that he "enjoyed every moment." He was "pleased" with the President's 'toasts' -- "especially the part on Jerusalem....and this was one of the friendliest of all our visits," he added. "There was no pressure put on me ... and I was received like a friend and an ally."

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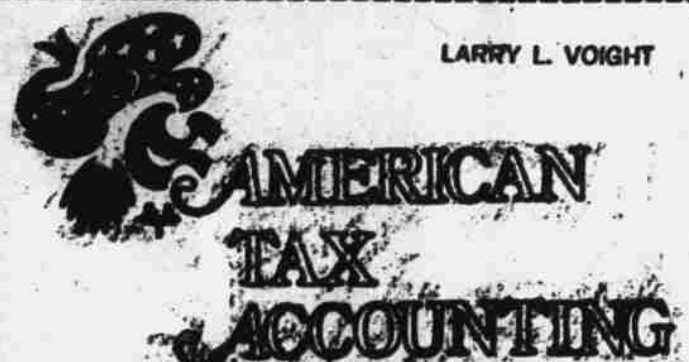
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