

**WASHINGTON DATELINE**

BY TRUDE B. FELDMAN  
ISRAELITE'S WHITE HOUSE CORRESPONDENT

## Exclusive Interview With Menachem Begin

"The free world does not realize what Israel did for it when we entered Lebanon and smashed the Palestine Liberation Organization," says Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin.

"Lebanon had actually become a Soviet base, from which the PLO would take over Jordan, Saudi Arabia and other places," Begin told me. "We were astonished at the huge supply of Russian weapons discovered when we entered the Lebanese town of Sidon. It will take hundreds of heavy trucks many weeks to take out all the Soviet arms concentrated in Lebanon."

In an exclusive interview during his recent visit to the United States, Prime Minister Begin also made these main points:

Israel deeply regrets the civilian casualties in Lebanon -- a result, he says, of the PLO practice of locating its military bases in schools, hospitals and other centers -- and stands ready to alleviate the plight of innocent victims of the war.

Jordan's King Hussein is "faithfully and efficiently" preventing the PLO from using Jordan as a terrorist base even as he remains hostile to Israel and allied to Israel's "implacable enemy, Iraq."

Saudi Arabia's new King Fahd has been running the country for a number of years and the death of King Khaled will make no difference in Saudi policy, which continues "to seek Israel's destruction and which is not a 'moderate' state."

The AWACS controversy was "regrettable" but did not affect President Reagan's attitude toward the Prime Minister or Begin's warm feelings for the American president.

Begin sees no reason ever to talk with PLO chieftain Yasser Arafat, whom he regards as the head of a neo-Nazi organization.

The Camp David peace process is "very much alive" and remains "the only approach" to the problem of the Palestinian Arabs.

"Israel will never agree to a Palestinian state but considers its autonomy plan a viable solution to the problem of the Palestinian Arabs."

## REMEMBERING SADIE

BY RABBI MARC H. TANENBAUM

The Biblical Matriarch, Sarah, founding mother of the Jewish people, died at the ripe age of 127 years; the great Biblical commentator, Rashi, said that "all her years were equal to goodness."

How could that be, considering the fact that Sarah suffered hunger, kidnapping by Pharaoh, was childless for 90 years, and saw her only son almost sacrificed? The rabbis answered that Sarah, the most righteous of women, accepted every hardship she experienced with love and these optimistic words, "Gam zu letovah -- this is also for the good." That is why all her years were considered good.

Mother Sarah continues to be a special consolation to my family as we observe the yahrzeit of our mother, Sadie Tanenbaum.

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The 68-year-old Israeli leader, a veteran of many political wars in his country, was relaxed and friendly during the interview at his Waldorf Astoria suite. In his manner and in his remarks, he strikes one as a man absolutely convinced of the justice of his cause. He told me he would like to be known as a "decent human being."

Elected Prime Minister five years ago, Begin has served longer in that office than any of his 5 predecessors. He has survived a record number of no confidence motions in the Knesset raised by his Labor Party opposition.

Begin's action in Lebanon -- and swift victory -- have won him the increasing support of his countrymen, papering over for the moment sharp differences existing on a number of economic, social and religious matters, including the administration of the West Bank and Gaza.

He said that Israel "very much wants to help" rebuild Lebanon and added that the task has already begun with the appointment of Yaakov Meridor, one of Begin's closest associates -- as the man charged with responsibility for working with the Lebanese people and helping them to rehabilitate their cities and towns.

Insisting that Israel doesn't want to keep its troops in Lebanon "a minute longer than necessary," Begin declared: "Lebanon is not the land of Israel... It is a sovereign foreign country. We want an independent Lebanon, whose borders we will respect. We want to sign a peace treaty with Lebanon on the basis of its territorial integrity."

"We are prepared to leave Lebanon today, tomorrow, anytime soon. We want our soldiers back home. But as President Reagan recently told the British Parliament, the scourge of terrorism in the Mideast must be stamped out."

"That is why we went into Lebanon. And we will not quit Lebanon until the lives of our children are no longer threatened. We must be sure that security arrangements are so organized that no gun, no rocket will hit our towns and villages. When these arrangements are completed, we will say 'goodbye' to Lebanon -- but not before."

Recalling the controversy surrounding the U.S. decision to sell AWACS radar planes and F-15 enhancements to Saudi Arabia last year, Begin described the issue as a "serious dispute" that generated unsympathetic debate. He said he particularly regretted the use by supporters of the AWACS sale of the slogan, "Begin or Reagan."

"I am not in competition with President Reagan," Begin said, adding: "That was a bitter, hurtful slogan to us. It was meant, I think, to force American Jews and millions of Christian friends to choose between being loyal to the President of the United States and supporting the Prime Minister of Israel."

Nevertheless, President Reagan understood our point of view and we understood his. I

regard the President and former Secretary of State Haig as 'devoted friends' of Israel who 'appreciate it as a bulwark of freedom in the Mideast.'

I asked Begin if he would ever consider talking directly with PLO leader Yasser Arafat. "Why should I talk to a man like Arafat?" He shot back. "If he had the power and strength to destroy each one of the 3 1/2 million Jews now living in Israel, he would do so. Now he has to look for asylum, and he is not in a good situation. I think his organization is -- if not completely paralyzed -- very much weakened by our action in Lebanon."

Begin continued: "The PLO is a neo-Nazi organization. Don't be astonished if the Russians help it. From August 1939 -- when the Soviet German non-aggression pact was signed -- until June 1941, when the Nazis attacked Russia, the Nazis and the Communists were allies. The Communists sent oil and agricultural products and other things to Nazi Germany. Now the Russians support a neo-Nazi organization called the PLO."

The only one of the three signers of the Camp David accords still in office, Begin believes the Middle East peace process he began with Anwar Sadat and Jimmy Carter in 1978 is still the "only way" of solving the problem of the Palestinian Arabs.

Prime Minister Begin reflected on what prompted Israel to move into Lebanon and on the long-range goals of what he dubbed "Operation Peace for Galilee." After more than 100 attacks by the PLO directed against civilians since last year's cease-fire, he said the final straw was the shooting of Shlomo Argov, Israel's Ambassador to Great Britain.

"He is a brilliant diplomat and a fine human being," Begin said. "Yet he lies in a hospital bed in London still unconscious, the victim of an assassin's bullet. His doctor does not know whether he'll survive; and if so, whether his intellectual faculties will be impaired."

"An attack on our ambassador is an assault upon our state, the majesty of our Republic."

"That, together with all of the other attacks, had to be answered. Now the PLO has been smashed, and now, there is a chance for peace for Lebanon and security for Israel."



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