

# Person To Person With The Vice President



Vice President George Bush gives details of his recent trip to the Mideast during an exclusive interview with our White House writer, Trude B. Feldman.

By Trude B. Feldman  
Our White House Writer

Vice President George Bush -- sitting in his White House office -- was in a relaxed and expansive mood as he reflected on his recent 10-day trip to Israel, Jordan and Egypt. He had just come from the Oval Office where he briefed President Reagan on the details of his private meetings with Prime Minister Shimon Peres, King Hussein and President Hosni Mubarak.

During an exclusive interview, the Vice President related that Mr. Reagan had closely followed his (Bush's) trip and was interested in any new recommendations. Having sensed the areas on which the three foreign leaders agree, Bush recommended specific steps that could advance the peace process.

Since Bush's first stop was in Israel, he later acted as a conduit to the Jordanians and Egyptians in explaining his findings there. Bush also found much more of a positive attitude than he had expected, particularly in view of earlier events -- including Yassir Arafat's abandonment of Hussein, the murder of the Mayor of Nablus and the cold peace between Egypt and Israel.

He said that one of the misconceptions of the Mideast is that the U.S. can snap its finger -- and that will bring peace to the region. He emphasized: "That's not true, as we've seen over the years...."

Displaying an impressive grasp of both the subtleties and the complexities of the Mideast scene, as well as the unique implications, George Bush responded -- in the 50-minute interview -- to the following questions:

**TRUDE FELDMAN:** If you suddenly became President of the United States, what would you do differently in the Mideast -- in view of your visit there?

**GEORGE BUSH:** I would support the President's 1982 peace initiative. (which calls for revitalizing the 'Camp David' peace process by broadening the number of Parties to direct negotiations.) It is still the underpinning of our policy in that part of the world. There are ingredients which all sides find compatible. It is not a plan that will be fully endorsed by any of the Parties. But the big point is that after my visit I'm convinced that the President's initiative, with possible modifications, offers the best hope for peace.

I'd also press for as many direct negotiations

as possible with Israel, recognizing that our role should never be the imposition of a peace plan.

**Q:** Why are you still supportive of that peace initiative when, after 4 years, there is little progress?

**A:** Because it addresses itself to the need to do something about the West Bank. It does not go the controversial Palestinian-state-route, one that gets a lot of lip service in the area, but a route that has some quiet support. And it does encompass the important principles of peace for territory.

**Q:** Did your trip result in anything like a new "Bush initiative"?

**A:** No. I'm not setting U. S. foreign policy. I hope I'm making a positive contribution to that policy. The purpose of my trip was to advance our policy and I believe I did so. I discussed my findings with the President and with Secretary of State (George) Shultz -- and out of my visit, there may be other things the U.S. will do. The President said he considers my talks to be most meaningful and constructive.

**Q:** What are the results of your visit to the three countries?

**A:** I'm pleased that my presence turned out to be catalytic for what now looks like a solution to the four-year-old dispute about Taba (a small resort area on the Gulf of Aqaba, and the only Sinai land not returned to Egypt under the terms of the 1979 Israeli-Egyptian peace treaty).

I give much credit to Richard W. Murphy (Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs) and Dennis Ross (of the National Security Council) for helping to speed up the solution.

(Mr. Murphy, a former ambassador to Saudi Arabia, stayed in Cairo a few days longer than Mr. Bush to help bring about the agreement. Upon his return, Ambassador Murphy told me that Mr. Bush's presence did, indeed, energize

both Egypt and Israel to reach the understanding to start arbitration of the Taba problem.)

**Q:** With the solution of Taba, how will relations between Egypt and Israel change?

**A:** I hope it will lead to a return of the Egyptian ambassador to Israel, and eventually, to more high-level meetings so that other agreements might be reached.

**Q:** Were there any other concrete results?

**A:** We did draw up a list of principles held in common among Egypt, Jordan and Israel. It is encouraging that in the wake of the Hassan-Peres meeting there was agreement by the three countries on these principles, and that is a rather unique accomplishment.

When you can develop a statement on a common approach to the peace process with the three countries who aren't in the habit of working out agreed statements...that's a contribution to peace.

Here again, Assistant Secretary Murphy's expertise was most helpful.

**Q:** How would you define our policy in the Mideast today?

**a:** Our policy is not to impose a settlement, but to try to be a catalyst for peace. We support an Israel with a qualitative edge in terms of armament, thus guaranteeing the perpetuation of its democracy. We also favor efforts to swell the ranks of the more moderate Arab countries and to isolate the radicals. We're concerned about radical Islam -- the Khomeinis and the Qadaffis (Col. Muammar of Libya), and people of that nature.

Our policy is to find a just and lasting peace. It has to be build on an Israel living behind secure and recognized boundaries. And there has to be a solution to the Palestinian question, as well as follow-on talks as outlined in the 'Camp David' process (which calls for self-government by the Palestinians of the West Bank and Gaza in association with Jordan).

**Q:** Do you think the U.S. should have an 'evenhanded' policy?

**A:** 'Evenhanded' is a code word for something many people did not feel was evenhanded. Years ago, when (Gov. William) Scranton used the word, I think he was talking about a balanced policy. But some thought he was suggesting an anti-Israel policy. So I'd be careful about code words. Since 1971, when I began dealing with such problems, I learned to be careful about code words.

But if one defines 'evenhanded' as wanting to have more Sadats (Egypt's late president) and fewer Qadaffis, or more people wanting to sign peace agreements with Israel, and wanting a solution to the West Bank problem -- the answer is 'Yes.'

**Q:** Would you support an independent Palestinian state?

**A:** No. It's not part of our policy and it's not part of what I think the solution is. I know that many people who give lip service to it are not really for it. I think we must find something more in line with the Reagan initiative.

**Q:** You have said there can be no peace in the Mideast until the Palestinian problem is solved. How do you believe it can be solved?

**A:** By getting more progress toward the Reagan initiative, and by getting people to sit down and talk in direct negotiations. As one example, King Hussein now has a formulation

(Continued on page 18)

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