



Target of a freeze: dedication ceremonies last week at Ma'ale Adumin, a new Israeli settlement in the West Bank

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weeks was transmitted to the President, White House aides bounced the cast of *Mama Malone* out of a studio in Burbank, Calif., where episodes of the new situation comedy were being filmed, so that Reagan could take over. Rehearsing half an hour before air time, the President, recalling an earlier TV series of which he had been the host, cracked up his staff by looking into the cameras and announcing: "Welcome to *Death Valley Days*."

Though Reagan and aides tinkered with the text until a few minutes before the President started speaking for real, none of the patchwork showed. The speech was as well crafted and lucid as any that Master Speechmaker Reagan has delivered.

The President began by noting that "today has been a day that should make us proud." It marked the successful completion, ahead of schedule and without significant incident, of the U.S.-mediated P.L.O. evacuation from Beirut, and meant that "we can now help the Lebanese to rebuild their war-torn country." But, he said, putting Lebanon back together should be only a start. "We must also move to resolve the root causes of conflict between Arabs and Israelis." He identified the most troublesome root as being the "homelessness of the Palestinian people," coupled with Israeli fear that fulfilling

their demands for a homeland would give birth to a contiguous, Soviet-dominated terrorist nation bent on destruction of the Jewish state. Said Reagan: "The question now is how to reconcile Israel's legitimate security concerns with the legitimate rights of the Palestinians."

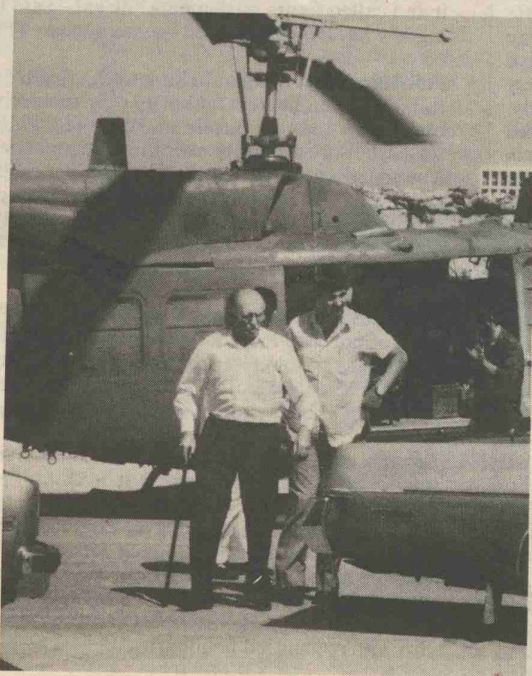
Under the Camp David accords, ham-

pered out by Israel, Egypt and the U.S. in 1978, that reconciliation was supposed to be accomplished by Israeli-Arab negotiations aimed at granting some form of self-government to the Palestinians of the West Bank and Gaza during a five-year transition period. The final status of the territories was to be determined by further

negotiations that would not begin until the autonomy arrangements were in effect. So far, however, the autonomy talks have been supported in the Arab world only by Egypt, and even the Egyptian-Israeli negotiations have been suspended since April.

Reagan implied that it is up to the U.S., as the only nation "in a position to deal with the key parties to the conflict on the basis of trust and reliability," to break the impasse. To do so, he recognized, Washington can no longer confine itself to the role of mediator. "It has become evident to me that some clearer sense of America's position on the key issues is necessary."

The President first made clear what the U.S. would not accept. One was the opening of any more Jewish settlements in the West Bank and Gaza. Since 1967 Israel has established roughly 100 settlements in those territories, housing about 30,000 people. Arabs fear that the purpose of the settlements is to tie the territories so closely to Israel that they can never be detached. Said Reagan: "The immediate adoption of a settlement freeze by Israel, more



Begin on his way to emergency Cabinet meeting

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United States

ingness to renew autonomy negotiations with the U.S., Egypt and "other states and elements," though not on the basis of Reagan's proposals.

Begin repeated this position in a meeting with Defense Secretary Caspar Weinberger, who was visiting Israel as the guest of his counterpart, Defense Minister Ariel Sharon. Weinberger, who was on a five-day, three-nation tour of the Middle East, replied that he hoped Israel would not reject Reagan's proposals "out of hand." Israelis regard Weinberger as the least sympathetic of all U.S. officials, but both men had their tempers under control; a Weinberger aide described the meeting as "totally civilized."

U.S. officials insist that they will not bring overt pressure on Israel to respond to Reagan's initiative. In particular, they say that the U.S. will not threaten a cutoff of economic or military aid. Rather, their strategy is to dangle the hope of genuine peace before the Israelis and spark a debate within the country that eventually will force a reluctant Begin to come around. They note that some of Reagan's proposals are compatible with a plan advanced by Begin's chief rival, Labor Party Leader Shimon Peres, in 1980. Under the Peres plan, Israel would retain control of a strip of fortified territory along Israel's 1967 borders, but return the rest of the West Bank and Gaza Strip to some form of Jordanian administration, with the provision that those lands be demilitarized. Indeed, the Labor Party leader cautiously endorsed Reagan's proposals as "a basis for serious dialogue." Peres added: "We are going to put our case before the people."

There are some signs, too, that Israeli public opinion may be swinging in a direction favorable to Reagan's proposals. In a poll published last week, the Jerusalem Post posed this question: "Are you for a peace agreement with Jordan that will require Israel to abandon parts of Judea and Samaria?" Only 46.8% of the respondents answered no, vs. 58.3% as recently as May. The proportion of yes answers rose from 29.3% to 40.29%.

The U.S. hopes, of course, assume that Arab states will eventually agree to negotiate on the basis of Reagan's proposals, or some variation of them. That is possible, but far from assured. Although the initial response of Arab leaders was muted, State Department officials say that the private reaction was favorable. Saudi King Fahd was said to be "upbeat." An additional reason for the Administration's speed-up in presenting its own plan was to influence Arab deliberations at the Fez summit. At best, the summit might have endorsed an

eight-point plan advanced last year by King Fahd. While that plan contains an implicit recognition of Israel's right to exist, it also insists on an independent Palestinian state with East Jerusalem as its capital. Administration officials feared the summit would reject even that plan and take a strong pro-P.L.O. position. Says one: "We had to take the initiative before their positions congealed."

Clearly, Jordanian participation in Palestinian autonomy negotiations would be a key to their success. The foreign ministry in Amman issued a mild statement that Reagan's initiative "contains a number of positive elements that deserve to be studied," but King Hussein said nothing. Hussein would like to regain authority over the West Bank, but he accepted a 1974 decision by an Arab summit in Rabat that only the P.L.O. could speak for the Palestinians; his country, which has a Palestinian majority, is more vulnerable to



Sharon, center, with his guest Weinberger at an army base in Israel
A "totally civilized" session with a man the Israelis suspect.

P.L.O. pressure than any other in the Arab world. Hussein dares not venture to negotiate on behalf of the Palestinians without backing from other Arab states and some assurance that the P.L.O. will not try to destabilize his regime for doing so.

Other moderate Arab states are aware that Reagan in his speech was at last showing a U.S. independence of Israeli policy that they have so long urged, and that this long-awaited initiative could die quickly if it is too adamantly rejected by both sides. At week's end there was speculation that even the P.L.O., which is struggling to preserve its political influence, would adopt a position in advance of the Fez summit that fell short of outright rejection of Reagan's proposals. Even if that happens, the most that American diplomats expect from Fez is a highly qualified pledge by the Arabs to consider the U.S. initiative.

The Administration has a program for follow-up moves to build momentum.

Secretary of State Shultz, who did more to shape the new policy than anyone else, will confer with Arab and Israeli leaders on the prospect for autonomy negotiations while they attend the United Nations General Assembly session that convenes in New York City late this month. If his soundings are favorable, Shultz is prepared to tour Middle East capitals this fall to develop more specific ideas for getting these talks started. Once negotiations begin, if they do, the Administration may assign a special presidential envoy to watch over them full time.

Shultz also has been moving to assure strong backing at home for Reagan's initiative. While it was being drafted, he consulted interested parties ranging from former Du Pont Chairman Irving Shapiro to AFL-CIO President Lane Kirkland. Shultz continued the effort last week, calling in both Jewish-American and Arab-American leaders.

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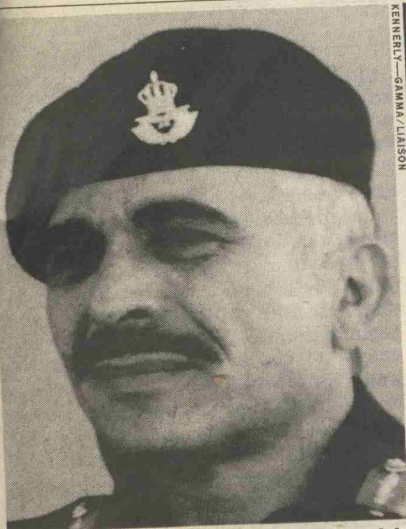
The effort so far has paid off in impressive domestic support. Even leaders of the American Jewish community, who usually are quick to take issue with any Washington move that appears to dilute American backing for Israel, seem to have been partly disarmed, at least in public. Asserted Julius Berman, chairman of the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations: "There are some very positive statements in there." He specified Reagan's call for "hard, fair and direct negotiating between the parties" and his "lack of support for an independent Palestinian state." Berman's criticisms were surprisingly mild: "What I am disappointed in is that the President seems to have altered the role of the U.S. from that of an honest broker to a party that now has a public position that must be de-

fended."

Other Jewish leaders echoed the Israeli concern that by putting forward a plan of his own, Reagan was attempting to "impose" some kind of settlement on Israel. Those worries appeared to be misplaced, or at least greatly exaggerated. As Administration spokesmen made clear in background explanations, the President's ideas for a peace were not carved in stone, and were intended primarily to break a stalemate in the peace negotiation. That in itself was an act of creative diplomacy. Whether or not the President's plan would ever be initialed at a second Camp David summit, Reagan had reasserted U.S. leadership in a dynamic way, and come forward with proposals that were clearly stamped "made in Washington"—rather than Riyadh, Amman or Jerusalem. It was an initiative sorely needed.

—By George J. Church.

Reported by Douglas Brew with Reagan, and Johanna McGeary/Washington



KENNETH—GAMMA/LIAISON



PHILIPOTT—SIGMA



ATLAN—SIGMA

Three Arab leaders whose approval is crucial, left to right: King Hussein of Jordan, King Fahd of Saudi Arabia, President Mubarak of Egypt

by Kissinger, in a daylong meeting. Within the Government, Shultz put together a balanced team of subordinates: Robert McFarlane, Paul Wolfowitz, Nicholas Veliotis, Richard Fairbanks and Lawrence Eagleburger. They developed a consensus that Shultz outlined to Reagan and his top White House staff during a three-hour chicken-salad lunch at Camp David on Saturday, Aug. 14. One participant recalls that Shultz, reading from four or five pages of notes on a yellow legal pad, was in quiet control of the meeting; the President accepted his ideas with little disagreement. Further meetings refined the plan, and the last act in the backstage drama occurred two weeks ago when Shultz secretly summoned Ambassadors Alfred Atherton and Richard Murphy from Cairo and Riyadh to Washington. They returned to their posts last Monday carrying Reagan's letter.

The result was a speech that, for all its expressions of sympathy, clashed with Israeli policy more openly than any other U.S. initiative since the Eisenhower era. The specific ideas in it were not new; indeed they almost mirror the expert consensus on the necessary and the possible that has evolved in recent years. But the President went further than any of his predecessors in embracing a broadly defined concept of Palestinian autonomy as a goal that the U.S. should promote. His view that the West Bank and Gaza should be linked to Jordan was another proposal that the U.S. had not adopted officially before; both Carter and Reagan had previously declined to suggest what the final status of those territories should be.

Most important, perhaps, by the very act of delivering the speech, Reagan showed that he now realizes the success of any new Middle East policy requires his personal supervision—and the power of his office behind its execution. Says Joseph Sisco, who was a high State Department official under Nixon and Ford: "A visible U.S. presence is the key to progress. The substance of Reagan's speech was good, but his personal involvement

is more than good; it is essential." Just how essential a direct and continuing presidential involvement is likely to be was illustrated by the reaction of the Begin government. The Israelis were caught unaware by Reagan's plan; they had expected the next U.S. move in the Middle East to be a proposal for American-mediated negotiations aimed at withdrawal of Israeli and Syrian troops from Lebanon. Begin was incensed that Reagan's letter, outlining his proposals, was delivered only on Tuesday, a day after it had been transmitted to King Hussein of Jordan, Egypt's President Hosni Mubarak and Saudi Arabia's King Fahd. American officials justified this procedure on the ground that before they could communicate it to Israel, they had to have some indication that the Arab countries would at least discuss the plan.

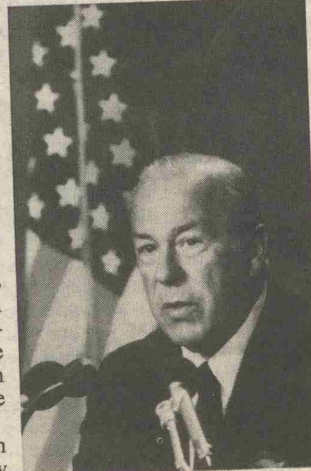
The Israeli rejection of those proposals was harsh and specific. The Cabinet communiqué included a detailed examination of how the Israeli government believes Reagan's proposals deviate from the Camp David accords. In so doing, the Israelis disclosed some details of Reagan's proposals that he did not make public in his speech. For example, the President on television said only that "Jerusalem must remain undivided, but its final status should be decided through negotiations." In his letter to Begin, according to the Israelis, Reagan proposed to let the Arab inhabitants of East Jerusalem vote in elections to set up a self-governing council for the West Bank and Gaza, an idea that the Israelis have consistently opposed.

Reagan's stance on Camp David was strongly endorsed last week by the

chief architect of the Camp David pact, Jimmy Carter. The President took care to keep his defeated rival informed; Geoffrey Kemp, a Middle East specialist on the National Security Council, visited the former President's home in Plains, Ga., three times, beginning in June, to brief Carter on events in the region and the Administration's developing plans. The final visit was last Wednesday, when Kemp, accompanied by Deputy Secretary of State Walter Stoessel, outlined the proposals that Reagan was about to present on TV.

Administration officials insist that Kemp never asked Carter for support or even advice, and the former President did not volunteer any. Anticipating that the Israelis would insist on their interpretation of the Camp David pact, the Administration hoped Carter would reply, as indeed he did. Going before TV cameras the day after Reagan's speech, Carter pronounced the new proposals "absolutely compatible" with Camp David. He also counseled Reagan that persistence could eventually overcome Israel's initial objections. Said Carter: "If they stick to their guns, there will be negotiations."

Carter may be right. The Israeli government's rejection of Reagan's proposals was not quite as vehement as it might have been. Some Reagan officials had feared that the Israeli Prime Minister might be provoked into proclaiming an immediate annexation of the West Bank and Gaza, and hardliners in the Cabinet pressed Begin to do exactly that. Others proposed a rapid development of new Jewish settlements. Begin rejected these courses and even left the door open a crack toward bargaining. The Cabinet communiqué proclaimed Israel's will-



TERRY ASHE

Secretary of State Shultz