Interview with Samuel W. Lewis

The Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training Foreign Affairs Oral History Project

AMBASSADOR SAMUEL W. LEWIS

Interviewed by: Peter Jessup

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Q: Good afternoon, Ambassador Lewis. It's very nice of you to consent to an interview on your career for the Association of Diplomatic Studies. As we discussed before, you were going to cover your career up to the major achievement, your long term in Israel. You were born in Houston, weren't you?

LEWIS: That's right.

Q: Your middle name is Winfield. Are you a descendent of Winfield Scott?

LEWIS: No, I wish I were. That's a family name, though, and it's been in the Lewis family since that period, so it may be that one of my ancestors was named for him.

Q: You went to Yale and were the class of '52. I'm just wondering, before we ask the standard question, "How did you get into the Foreign Service?" was there any particularly influence in New Haven that led you in that direction?

LEWIS: Very much so. Being born in Houston and going through public high school, I don't think I had much knowledge at all about the Foreign Service before I went to Yale. Actually, there was one early influence. A very good friend of my father was a lady who

was then the librarian at Rice Institute, now Rice University, a single lady, and one of her closest family friends was a longtime career Foreign Service officer, who was ambassador in the latter part of his career in Turkey and two or three other places. Throughout her life, she had traveled around and spent vacations at various embassies, visiting her friends, and she used to come back and tell stories to our family about her trips. I heard first about the diplomatic service, really, through these recountings of her exposure to Foreign Service life back in the Thirties and Forties.

Q: Do you care to name the lady?

LEWIS: The lady's name was Sarah Lane.

Q: Was that Arthur C. Lane's...

LEWIS: No, she was not Foreign Service family. She was from Missouri, but her friend was Ambassador Fletcher Warren. I met him once, only, but that was kind of an early exposure to the idea of the Foreign Service.

It really was to Yale. I started out majoring in engineering, and decided rather soon I wasn't interested or very well equipped to be an engineer, moved over to psychology, and then ultimately I changed my major and took up the thing which I'd always been interested in since early childhood, which was history. But I never was interested in teaching or academic life, and I could never figure out any way to make a career out of history until, in my junior year at Yale, I took a course from Arnold Wolfers in international politics, and for the first time, really was exposed through that course and through that great man, Wolfers, to some dimensions of the international world.

I got to hearing, while at Yale, about the Foreign Service from some of my professors, and for the first time, I figured there was a career line where I could match my interests in history and the international world with a way to make a living that wouldn't involve teaching. So I took the Foreign Service exam, actually, when I was a junior at Yale, and

passed with a very good score. I went on and finished. Of course, you get your grades many months later, so I was already a senior by that time. This was 1952. I also had some little exposure to CIA, which was recruiting rather heavily through various Yale faculty members in those days.

Q: The height of the Cold War.

LEWIS: This was the Korean War period, exactly. I really expected I would be going into the service when I graduated from Yale in '52, but as it turned out, I had a bad knee, and they wouldn't take me. I couldn't pass the physical. I was anxious to get into the Foreign Service as soon as possible, but that was not only the height of the Cold War, it was the height of the McCarthy period.

As you probably remember, when the Eisenhower Administration came in, in the spring of '53, they undertook a lot of reassessments of the alleged “poor security” in the State Department stemming out of McCarthy's attacks of the two or three proceeding years. They stopped all recruiting until they reinvestigated every existing employee. Everybody on the rolls had to be totally reinvestigated for security clearances before they would hire anybody else. So there was a long hiatus. Those of us who had passed the exam and were on the roster, ready to be appointed, just had to find other ways to support ourselves. So from '52 until '54, I was waiting for a chance to get in the Service.

Q: Was that hiatus actually 24 months of no hiring?

LEWIS: Yes, it was at least 24 months. In the meantime, I went on to graduate school at Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies (SAIS) here in Washington, and took my master's in international relations, specializing, incidentally, in the Middle East, though I never got there for many years thereafter. Eventually it came in quite handy.

But I was finally offered an appointment with the very first group to be appointed after this long dry period of no appointments at all, and I got in the Service in May of 1954. I

only got in at that time because they had some extra money to hire people for visa jobs in the Refugee Relief Program. A special Refugee Relief Act was passed in 1953, with a whole lot of extra visa numbers for people with genuine refugee status or what they called internal refugees from various natural disasters, like earthquakes and floods. A whole lot of those visas were set aside for Italian refugees, as a result of the strong influence of Friends of Italy in the Congress. There were 60,000 visas a year set aside for Italian refugees.

Q: What were they refugees from?

LEWIS: They were almost entirely refugees from natural disasters, earthquakes in Calabria 15 years before and they'd never, allegedly, gotten fully resettled, people in that category. It was really a way of increasing the Italian quota without saying so. But the immigration visas were all issued in either Genoa or Naples or Palermo in Italy. They could not begin to handle the sudden new great load of immigration visas with some special requirements that were put on by the Refugee Act over the normal immigration requirements.

So they hired a whole slew of vice consuls and sent them out to these three visa issuing posts, and some to Germany, as well.

Q: Was that just a rank rating, or did that automatically shove you into the consular service?

LEWIS: We were originally hired as staff officers, vice consuls, but since we were ready to be appointed as regular FSOs, within a month or two after I got to Naples, my regular appointment as an FSO Class 6 came through, and my assignment was vice consul.

I never will forget our arrival in Naples, Peter, because my wife and I had been married about a year and had been so excited about going out to our first Foreign Service post. We'd been living in Washington, hand to mouth, trying to wait out until finally the

Department would get around to appointing us. I was working nights, proofreading, going to school in the daytime. My wife was sick most of the time, so she wasn't able to support us as we had anticipated.

In any case, we arrived in Naples, the first time either one of us had been overseas or out of the country, so it was a very exciting moment. We went to the old Parker Hotel up on the Vomero in Naples, and the next morning, went down to Consulate General there at Mergelina on the waterfront, to report in for duty. Since there had been this great talk in Washington about this huge workload and how eager they were to get us out there, we were, of course, run through with one week's orientation in Washington, no language training, no nothing; just “get there and get to work.”

We walked into the administrative officer's office, dressed to the nines, and a fellow named Bob [Robert W.] Ross was administrative officer. He looked up from his desk and said, “Oh, my God, another one!” It was a rather deflating experience, to say the least, especially for Sallie. It turned out there were 24 new vice consuls just appointed; all of us arrived in Naples within three weeks of one another.

Q: To be based in Naples?

LEWIS: Just for Naples. They moved the visa section to a separate building in an old abandoned apartment house. There wasn't room, obviously, in the consulate. We were up on a hill, rather second-class citizens to the rest of the consulate. But it turned out to be, in retrospect, really a nice experience. Visa work is not the most exciting in the world, but it gave you a good chance to practice your Italian.

We had so many visa officers that they had to divide up the jobs in such a way, it was kind of like a production line. Each person did one little piece of document screening, interviewing, and so forth, and the approximately 15 months, I guess, that I spent in Naples in that job, would have been pretty grim, except that because there was this whole bunch of young officers, many single, some with new wives, all there kind of in the same

boat, we really had a lot of fun. It turned out to be socially a kind of nice experience, in retrospect. We hadn't been through a Foreign Service course. Most new officers come in with a class; go to an introductory officers' course. We didn't have any class, so we had our own, in effect, in Naples, in the visa section.

Q: Anyone from your class at Yale?

LEWIS: No, no. No one from Yale. There were seven of us that had been the first appointed to arrive on the same day, and then many others came the next two weeks thereafter.

Q: What would your comment be on the value in that particular place and later on, of local employees? Some of the work was impossible without them, wasn't it?

LEWIS: Absolutely crucial. Of course, the local employees were doing nine-tenths of the work, and being tolerant and really quite helpful in supporting the young officers. But that consulate, like every other place I've served in the Foreign Service, wouldn't run for ten minutes without dedicated local staff. We're so darn lucky to have these staffs around the world. We don't treat them terribly well as a service, but nonetheless, they're extraordinarily loyal.

We were living down on the sea, and from the point of view of personal satisfactions, Naples, in those days, was a fascinating place, still close enough to the war that there was a lot of destruction still that hadn't been cleaned up, and it was a very poor place. Tourists regarded it rather with a jaundiced eye, but living there, the spirit of the Neapolitans came through, and it's a wonderful spirit, one that you can't help but admire. And the physical beauty of the place was fantastic. We had an apartment right down on the sea, an old palazzo, 16th century palazzo, that was turned into a lot of apartments. We had a big living room and big bedroom and a terrace, basically, all looking right out at Vesuvius and Capri, and with the sea about 15 feet below us. So it had its compensations.

Q: Was there a NATO sea command there?

LEWIS: Yes. The NATO command in Naples was very large in the life of the city, and there was a commissary out there, an officers' club, and that also made life a lot nicer for the families, particularly. But there's so much to do around the Naples area, so many wonderful places to go and explore, tourism and history and the rest, sailing, that we didn't spend much time, really, in Pozzuoli, where the NATO command was, except in one sense. Both my wife and I were and are very avid amateur thespians, and we got involved with the drama group out at NATO headquarters where we acted in some plays with a rather international cast. The Navy, on one occasion, flew our company down to Malta to entertain the troops. We took a production of “The Hasty Heart” by John Patrick for several performances on British and American bases on Malta, and had great fun being flown there in a Navy plane, getting tours of the island, and so forth. So NATO was useful from that dimension.

Q: What made you move after 15 months—requirements to the north?

LEWIS: The general career idea was in assigning all these vice consuls to the visa refugee program, which was a specialized out-of-the-ordinary kind of visa work and not even regular visa work, and they made an effort to have you spend a year or so in that, and then to move you to a regular Foreign Service post so you'd get more typical Foreign Service experience. So after about a year, the group began to move out elsewhere in Europe, and other people came in. We had no idea we'd be staying in Italy, but lo and behold, we were transferred to Florence, which was a four-man post in those days with two secretaries.

A very interesting place, too, because it was the very center of the so-called “red belt” in Italian politics, governed by Communist provincial council, though the mayor at that time was a rather unusual left-wing Christian Democrat named Giorgio LaPira. But the Communist-Socialist influence was very heavy in Tuscany and in Emilia Romano, the two regions that were under the jurisdiction of the consulate in Florence.

I went up there initially as the number-four junior officer, so I was the administrative officer and did some consular work, as well, though there was a more senior consul who actually was in charge of the consular section.

We stayed in Florence for three and a half years, and in the course of that, I gradually moved up in the place as people got transferred, and I got a promotion.

Q: You must have absorbed an enormous amount of culture. Not many people have three years.

LEWIS: We had a total of over five years in Italy. It was really fabulous. I was the deputy principal officer and political officer the last two years I was there, and was in charge of the consulate for several months. It was a very interesting place for political reporting, not like an embassy, in the sense that we weren't dealing with the government, but there was a lot of local politics with national significance going on. So I had a chance to do a lot of think pieces and research-type reports that give you a lot of satisfaction, though I know now that they're not as useful to the State Department as the people who write them think they ought to be.

Q: Did reports from smaller places like Florence, no matter how brilliantly written, get beyond the Italian desk officer in the Department?

LEWIS: Not beyond the desk officer.

Q: But there has been some brilliant reporting from small posts.

LEWIS: Absolutely, and I think we did some good reporting from Florence. The big issue in Italy in those days for the United States was a continuing fear in Washington that the Socialists, who were then closely aligned with the Communists, would somehow or other get into the government, and the big struggle for about a decade was “How will the

Christian Democrats keep the Socialists out of government coalitions and retain a kind of centrist coalition sufficiently strong to stay in power?”

There were many, many arguments over those years as to what the Socialists were like and whether they were really people that you might entrust Italy to, even in part. Big disagreements. We were reporting on Socialist activities, and those of us, particularly in areas like Florence, had a chance to talk politics a lot with Socialist Party members and sometimes with Communist Party members, but particularly with the Socialists that in Rome, the reporting officers were warned off of. This was too touchy politically to do, although there was one officer in Rome always who was charged with following the left. Therefore, the reporting from Florence, in particular, and one or two of the other posts, on the strength and the attitudes of the Socialists and their allies, was of great interest to the embassy in Rome and also to the desk in Washington, and had some role to play in the question of how you assess broader U.S. policy toward Italy.

But we had also a kind of interesting diplomatic problem in Florence that's quite unique. Florence happens to be responsible for San Marino, not just as a consulate, but it's always been the diplomatic representative of the United States toward the Republic of San Marino, which is over on the Adriatic, in our consul district. San Marino is one of those tiny little independent countries that had, I think, 15,000 people, totally surrounded by Italy, had a Communist-Socialist government, and it was the only one outside of the Eastern Bloc that was even allegedly elected, brought into power by an election.

The agreement between the Italian Government and the San Marino Government back in the early Thirties, which established a protectorate relationship, had specified that no embassies in Rome could be the diplomatic channels to San Marino. That's why our consulate in Florence was the diplomatic representative to San Marino.

What that meant for me was that twice a year, we got a chance to go over to San Marino and take part in a wonderful medieval ceremony which goes back to the 15th century. San

Marino is governed by a Grand and General Council which is popularly elected, and the executive powers held by two individuals who served together, the “Captains Regent”; they're elected by the General Council. The Captains Regent served for six months, based on a model from the Venetian times and it's come down to the present day. They have a huge inauguration ceremony twice a year, with a little, marvelous medieval army and 25 people parading around this little hill town. So we'd go over for the ceremony, dressed up in our striped pants. Since I was Charg# quite a bit of the time, I went to a number of these ceremonies.

But what was really going on was we were meeting, after the ceremony and before it, semi-clandestinely in a kind of fishbowl atmosphere, with the Christian Democratic leaders who were in opposition, helping to encourage them in their efforts to get into power and to throw out the Communists and Socialists. Eventually, in fact, that did happen while I was there, the first time in post-war history that the Communist Party had been gotten out of power democratically. This was a great achievement for American diplomacy in our eyes, anyway, and rated a few paragraphs in Time magazine. But that was kind of a fun dimension of the job in Florence. It's a little unusual for a consulate.

Q: I remember on the NSC, McGeorge Bundy used to call the covert support of the Christian Democratic Party and their allies “our annual shame,” and finally got it sort of quashed. Then lo and behold, later on, when Graham Martin was there, he tried to revive it.

LEWIS: Yes, that's right. I was back in Washington by that time. I stayed involved with Italian affairs for a long time.

Q: You went on to the desk.

LEWIS: I went from Florence to the desk, first as assistant desk officer, then as desk officer. So I really had my first seven and a half years in the Foreign Service was all Italy. I didn't even mention that in the middle there, while I was in Florence, they had a big gap

in Rome in the administrative area and the consular area, and I went down and spent six months TDY, first in the consular section, then as general service officer. So we had six delightful months in Rome, my wife and I, in either 1957 or 1958.

Q: (John) Reinhardt was ambassador?

LEWIS: Yes, he was. I served first under Clare Boothe Luce. She was ambassador when I went to Naples. That was the period when she had the famous arsenic-in-the-ceiling affair. You remember?

Q: Yes.

LEWIS: Her hair started to fall out, and she was wasting away, and they couldn't figure out what in the world was going on. Finally they diagnosed the fact that she was being slowly poisoned with arsenic. Then they concluded, allegedly, at least, that it was the paint from the ceiling of her bedroom. She always spent a lot of time in bed, reading, working, drinking coffee. The story was that this old medieval paint, which was heavily loaded with arsenic, in the Villa Taverna, flakes of it were falling off in her coffee and food, and that's how she was being poisoned.

Q: That's hard to believe enough could...

LEWIS: This was the official version. It may be that, indeed, there was much more to it, and she was really being slowly poisoned by the cook or somebody else. But the fact that she had arsenic poisoning, I think was quite well substantiated.

Q: But she apparently recovered.

LEWIS: She recovered after they finally redecorated the room and diagnosed it. Jim Zellerbach, who was a Crown Zellerbach executive, succeeded her.

Q: So you had one career and two politicos?

LEWIS: Those were both politicos of a very different sort. Zellerbach was a much less political politico; Luce was very much into party politics. She was, I must say, a delightful, impressive person, though she was very tough ideologically. She was a real lady, and everybody who worked closely with her—I didn't, obviously, but I saw her every now and then.

Q: Did she keep one DCM or have several?

LEWIS: She had Jim Jernegan as her DCM for quite a long time. I think maybe she had somebody else. She had two DCMs, I think. I've forgotten who the other one was, who went on to Singapore.

Q: She got along with them?

LEWIS: She got along pretty well with her staff. Zellerbach did, too. Mrs. Zellerbach was a real trial to everyone, but he was a very nice, unassuming, undemanding sort of fellow. Then Reinhardt succeeded him. I must have still been in Florence when Reinhardt came in. He was a delightful and able person, and it was a great relief to the staff to have a career officer in the job.

Then I came back to Washington to the desk, and he was Ambassador part of that period, 1959 to '61.

Q: Was the Under Secretary for Political Affairs Alexis Johnson then?

LEWIS: No. I've forgotten who it was, but Alex took that job at the beginning of the Kennedy Administration and had it for several years thereafter.

I was, as I say, very much immersed in Italian affairs, totally, engaged in a huge running battle from the desk with Outerbridge Horsey, who by this time had become DCM in Rome. “Outer” was convinced that if the Socialists ever got into the government, that

the world would come to an end, and if he ever talked to them in any encouraging way, that that would lead to them coming into government. So he tried to cut off even those rather tenuous contacts that the embassy had with the Socialists before he arrived in the department, in the Office of West European Affairs, we were very anxious to get the reporting on Socialist and Communist affairs, and were reduced to encouraging the political officers out there with the contacts to send us back-channel “official-informal” letters, because “Outer” would never allow their dispatches, much less their telegrams, to get out of the embassy. We had quite a running debate with the embassy in Rome all during “Outer”'s period.

Q: Was the Agency also under that blanket business of not talking to the left?

LEWIS: No, no. The Agency was talking to the left, and the Agency was talking to everybody. They had a huge station in Rome in those days, and they had big covert action programs with the free trade unions. They did have contacts with both the Communists and the Socialists.

Q: But was their reporting helpful to the Department?

LEWIS: Yes. On the other hand, actually, I'm not sure of that, Peter, because I wasn't cleared to see their reporting. I wasn't high enough in the bureau at the time. The agency reporting went to the deputy office director and office director for West European Affairs, so I really had only occasional glimpses and conversations about it. So I don't know how it was, but they were definitely reporting on this topic, yes.

We had, I guess, by that time, a lot more involvement in Italian politics than we needed. It started back in the Forties, when the threat of a Communist takeover was very real, and we developed all of these relationships, particularly with the free trade unions and with the Social Democratic Party, the Christian Democrats, and those were still being maintained, and there were some covert subsidies involved for newspapers and that sort of thing. I

think by the late Fifties, it was all very much unnecessary and should have been gradually phased out, but bureaucracies, of course, have their momentum that's rather hard to kill.

Q: So Outerbridge Horsey was linked up with the same people who held that phobia in Washington for so long.

LEWIS: Oh, yes. He was a real Cold Warrior. He had been in Italy, of course, as political counselor in the early Fifties. I think this was his third tour when he was DCM and I was on the desk. He was a real expert on Italy, he really knew the society and the politics better than any of his political officers ever hoped to, and he was a very powerful advocate and antagonist. Therefore, he pretty much ran the show, despite the Department's desire to shift the policy ten or 15 or 20 degrees. As long as “Outer” was there, the Socialists weren't going to get their nose into the tent. We wasted so much energy trying to keep the Socialists out of the government of Italy.

When they finally did come into a coalition some years later they proved to be very toothless tigers. The irony was that many of the Socialists were very pro-American, very admiring of the United States, and anxious to get away from their long alliance with the Communists, in which they'd been the junior partner and stepped on repeatedly over the decades.

Q: One non-political question. Did you see a great difference between the northern Italian and the Neapolitan, both in language and attitude?

LEWIS: And food.

Q: Has that been exaggerated?

LEWIS: No, I think it's certainly there, but they're all Italians. The southerners are a lot more emotional and maybe a little more corrupt, in some ways more fun. If you let yourself go, you can enjoy the southerners enormously. If you are too Anglo-Saxon in your own

personal style, you'll find the southerners very messy and unpleasant. We enjoyed Naples as much as any place we ever lived, but we became much more involved with the society, both political and cultural individuals, in Florence. One thing, we were there longer. Our Italian was much better by that time, and Florence is a very interesting, lively place intellectually, though it had its precious qualities.

I rather think that both the northerners and the southerners are, in different ways, better than the Romans, who are neither and both, but have their own personality as a group.

Q: Do you still pore over certain data on the Italian scene with interest?

LEWIS: With interest, sure. We love Italy. It's the first place we ever lived outside of the United States, and being there so long and having a lot of good friends, we have that special place in our heart for Italy that we'll never get rid of. We get back every two or three years to visit friends in Florence, in particular, where we still have friends who are quite active.

By odd chance, the third day I was in the consulate in Florence, I was temporarily sitting in the consular office, because the consul was on vacation or something, and I heard a fellow outside talking to the Italian assistant about wanting to register his child's birth. It had a kind of funny ring to it. I stuck my head out the door and discovered it was a Yale classmate named Bert Fantacci, who was an Italo-American who had been in my class at Yale, and had gone back to work in his father's business in Florence. He'd been raised, basically, in the United States and Italy both, and he was truly a binational personality. I hadn't seen him since we'd graduated, but he was a pretty good friend at Yale. So through Bert and his American wife, Penny, who was a daughter of Frederic March and Florence Eldredge, who just died, we got introduced through them to a lot of Florentines early on, and they remain very close friends to this day.

Q: Then how did you get the switch to Brazil?

LEWIS: What really happened was that after seven and a half years, by the beginning of '61, Kennedy was elected. I was thoroughly an EUR type. My whole career had been in Italy and in the European bureau, and I'd absorbed, I think, all of the prejudices and blinders of the European specialists in the State Department: “That's the only place that matters. The rest of the world has just a bunch of uncivilized problems.”

I had a great break. Dean Rusk was appointed Secretary of State, and Chester Bowles was Under Secretary (i.e., deputy Secretary). “Chet” Bowles was, of course, a politician who had been governor of Connecticut, a member of Congress, ambassador to India back in the Truman Administration, and a great, powerful figure in the liberal wing of the Democratic Party, and Kennedy's foreign policy advisor during the campaign, and aspired to be Secretary of State. He really thought he would be. For a variety of reasons which are kind of complicated, Bowles was an old New Dealer from the Roosevelt era, really, and a very talkative and very creative person. His personality didn't jive very well with Kennedy's or the Kennedy crowd that came into the White House with Kennedy, the “Boston mafia.”

Q: A little generation gap.

LEWIS: A huge generation gap, too garrulous, too idealistic, not hard, tough-minded enough in their lingo. But he was too powerful in the party to be ignored, so he became Under Secretary. He was a friend of Dean Rusk's. In fact, oddly enough, it was he who had suggested Rusk to Kennedy, to be Under Secretary, thinking that he would be Secretary. He wasn't the only one who suggested Rusk, but he was stunned when Rusk ended up Secretary and he was deputy. But he came into the State Department, brought two people with him from his congressional staff. He was in Congress at the time. One was Tom Hughes, his chief administrative assistant on the Hill, and the other was Jim Thomson. Jim was a junior staffer in his congressional office, a China scholar from Harvard.

So the Under Secretary's office was staffed with these two outsiders, and Bowles, a real wild man for the bureaucracy, with all sorts of ideas about changing the role of the career versus the outsiders, bringing in a lot of fresh blood, sweeping out some of the tired blood and the State Department bureaucracy was horrified at the sight of Bowles in the Under Secretary's office.

Luke Battle, who was appointed as executive secretary by Rusk, and Bill Brubeck, who was one of his deputies from politics and academia, who came in, really, with the Bowles team, realized that they needed somehow to connect Bowles up better with the system. He was extremely busy, churning around with all sorts of ideas and projects which just didn't fit the way the system worked. So they set out to find a Foreign Service officer to put in Bowles' staff, as a staff assistant, to try to get his paper flow and his activities meshed a little better with the bureaucracy.

They interviewed several people. Somebody in EUR suggested me. I don't know why, to this day, my name was thrown up to them, along with another fellow, Bob Burns. There were two of us from EUR that were interviewed by Luke Battle for this position.

Then afterwards, we were asked were we interested in the position. Well, Bob said, “Frankly, no.” He didn't want to be “out of the mainstream;” he wanted to stay in the system, he heard bad things about Bowles from everybody. He'd like to pass it, if he possibly could. I was, by this time, feeling it was time for a change, and it sounded like an interesting way to learn something different about the system and especially the Seventh Floor. So I said, “Sure, I'd be delighted.”

Q: Sounds fascinating to me.

LEWIS: All of my friends in EUR thought I was absolutely bananas to go up and get into this political atmosphere of this Bowles office, where you will be chopped to ribbons

by these politicians. But I went up as a staff assistant, and I stayed, then, with “Chet” throughout the rest of his State Department career.

Tom Hughes, very soon thereafter, moved over to INR and became deputy director, first, then later director. He remained close to “Chet,” but he got himself out of his immediate staff. Jim Thomson and I then shared the office for a while. Later on, we brought in two more people, Andrew Rice, who was an economic development specialist from outside the Department, and Phil Merrill, who is now the publisher of The Washingtonian magazine. Phil came into our office in 1961 or '62, almost directly out of Cornell, as a speechwriter. Then there was Brandon Grove, who was the fifth member of this entourage. Brandon is now the new Director of the Foreign Service Institute. Some time not too many years ago, he turned up as our consul general in Jerusalem while I was ambassador in Tel Aviv. In any case, there were three to four of us there at any one time, along with a couple of secretaries.

Bowles had an extraordinary effect on my life. He was truly one of the most interesting and, I think, admirable figures of this century, much underrated by many, not by everybody. He wrote a whole slew of books about foreign policy in the course of his career. He was an extraordinarily eloquent spokesman for a liberal foreign policy perspective, and particularly his preoccupation was with the Third World at a time when it was still very unfashionable to pay any attention to it. Because that's where his interests lay, he concentrated throughout his time on African, Asian, and Latin American issues, leaving Europe pretty much to George Ball, who was number three, the Under Secretary for Economic Affairs, an Europeanist, and Alex Johnson, who was Deputy Under Secretary for Political Affairs. Alex technically reported to Bowles. In fact, in temperament and style and background, he was very close to Rusk, so before long, the fact that Alex was Bowles' deputy became more fiction than a fact.

Bowles only lasted as Under Secretary about ten or eleven months. There was a cabal in the White House that decided he was too fuzzy-minded and they had to get rid of him.

Bobby Kennedy didn't like him at all, and Ted Sorensen was about his only defender in that Kennedy entourage. More importantly, he and Rusk really didn't hit it off. Rusk was a very careful and different kind of leader. Bowles was very loyal to Rusk, in some ways maybe too loyal for his own good, because he had lots of political allies outside that he was reluctant to go to. He felt he should try to be a loyal deputy. But they just didn't mesh. Bowles had never been number two to anybody in his whole life. He'd run his own advertising business, had been head of Roosevelt's Office of Price Administration, and so forth and so on.

Q: Benton & Bowles.

LEWIS: Yes. Being the deputy is a special kind of role, and he really wasn't temperamentally fitted for it. But his ideas and his memoranda to Kennedy and to Rusk, all of which were later on published in a book that I happened to edit for him, revealed a great far-sightedness about American interests and the dangers of some of the courses Kennedy was embarked on. They were really prescient. If you look back at those memos today about Vietnam, about Cuba, about Africa, about approaches toward Asia, you see that if only Kennedy and Rusk had known how to make use of Bowles' vision and his eloquence and his management experience, for that matter, Kennedy would have avoided some of the mistakes of that administration. But it just didn't work in terms of temperament.

Q: How many people in any administration, particularly now, have time for vision? It's day to day, crisis on top of crisis.

LEWIS: That's true. There only rarely are moments when long-range thinking finds any audience in the State Department or the White House.

It takes a very special kind of Secretary of State or President to be able to use the sort of thinking and creativity that Bowles had to offer. In my experience, really only Henry Kissinger knew how to use ideas and to turn them into diplomatic strategy. He would

not have been able to use Bowles either, because their personalities would never have meshed, but the ideas he would have used. Anyway, Bowles was kicked upstairs.

Q: I was wondering about that.

LEWIS: What happened was in November of '61, Kennedy finally concluded he had to make a series of shifts in the State Department. He wasn't happy with the way State was performing, and it was all blamed on Bowles, quite unfairly, in my view. I wrote an article about this years ago, which appears in an appendix in a book by Bowles.

Q: Which book is that?

LEWIS: It's called Promises to Keep, and it really is a compilation of his speeches and writings of that period. Jim Thomson and I separately did memos for a project which never was carried out by another author, analyzing what went wrong in the State Department in the Bowles-Rusk era. My memo appears in this appendix.

In any case, “Chet” still had too much political clout in the party just to be thrown aside, so there was a big shakeup. Bowles was named special advisor to the President for Asia, Africa, and Latin America, a kind of super roving ambassador, if you will, but with an office, which he insisted on, in the White House, or at least in the old Executive Office Building, as well as an office in the State Department. He kept his staff, and he had, supposedly, full access to feed his ideas to Kennedy and to Rusk, and to carry out special missions, which is the way they sold him on it.

George Ball was promoted to be the Under Secretary, from being the second Under Secretary. Averell Harriman was persuaded to come in as Assistant Secretary for Far Eastern Affairs, quite a come-down in title for somebody who had been governor and Cabinet member and so on, but he was terrific, incidentally. It was a great coup getting Averell in that kind of role during that period. There were several other shifts. It was called the “Thanksgiving Day Massacre” in 1961.

Bowles asked whether I wanted to stay with him or to go back to a Foreign Service career, a normal Foreign Service career. I said that I wanted to stay with him as long as he was going to be doing this job. I felt that he had been very badly used, and that he was a great national asset. I had learned an awful lot from him about the world in those first few months. I was once again advised by all my Foreign Service friends, “Get out of there as fast as you can. You're tied to a dying horse. Don't be ridiculous. Get back to a regular job.” But I didn't.

I stayed with “Chet” for the remainder of his time in the administration, until in the summer of '63, that is, almost two years later, he was persuaded to go back to India a second time as ambassador. By that time, he had realized that the job was really kind of—it wasn't a phony job, but he wasn't being listened to. He wasn't being taken seriously. He was given some missions to undertake, and he did his best to come back with the kind of reports and recommendations that made a lot of sense, but which basically neither Rusk nor Kennedy cared very much to read. So for his own self-respect, in fact, he didn't want to get out of government; he was too committed. So he went back to India. He had always felt India was of enormous importance in American foreign policy and had had a very successful stint there as Ambassador once before.

He asked me to go to India with him as special assistant, but I decided I should move on after two years in this kind of role, writing speeches, helping to write memos on every subject from Vietnam to Iran, to Africa, to Latin America, traveling to some 65 countries with him on various missions. I had learned an enormous amount about the world, and the Third World in particular, and my whole horizon had just totally opened for me, particularly the developing world. “Chet” was very much involved with the Peace Corps and AID's economic development projects and philosophy. I worked on a number of studies for him on those subjects. And I felt that it was time that I got away from “Chet” professionally, because I was sort of losing track of who I was. I was too much immersed as an extension of him, professionally and psychologically, probably for my own good.

Q: How old was Bowles when he went back to India?

LEWIS: I would say he was around 65. I don't remember exactly, but something like that.

By chance, at this time, I was nominated to be a Princeton Fellow at the Woodrow Wilson School at Princeton for a year. They had a series of mid-career fellowships for people in various government agencies, and I was selected to be the State Department representative for that year. That was a graceful way to disengage from “Chet.” Professionally and personally though, I remained an enormous admirer of him and his family and what he did. He could have done much for the Kennedy Administration if they had only listened more to him—for instance, about staying out of Vietnam.

I went to Princeton with the idea of studying more economics and improving my economic skills, because I wanted to try doing some work in the development field. I figured that the traditional Foreign Service route of political officer was too narrow though, basically, I am a political officer, and politics is what fascinates me. But working with Bowles, I had come to appreciate much more the interaction between the development issues and political issues.

I also became very much immersed in inter-agency problems. He took that on as a serious part of his mandate, to try to make our inter-agency process work better. One of the things he did as special representative of the President was to chair a series of chiefs of missions meetings all over the developing world, about half a dozen of them over the course of a year and a half. They were very different kinds of chiefs of missions meetings. In the usual kind, you just have ambassadors. Bowles insisted that we invite the head of each major government agency component, along with ambassadors, so you had the country teams from each place at these conferences, as well as many senior Washington officials from the various agencies. And the agendas were much broader. They were political in strategy, but they were also development agendas, information agendas, and the rest. I

organized all those conferences for “Chet,” and went with him to all of them. I was his chief staff guy.

Q: How many?

LEWIS: There were about a half a dozen, a couple in Latin America, a couple in Asia, a couple in Africa. In the course of going to those, we did a lot of other special missions. I got to see about 60 or 70 of our ambassadors in action at these meetings, along with their country teams, and I formed some very clear views of how ambassadors ought to operate and how they shouldn't. I also saw about 65 different embassies, and I had well implanted in my mind places I really didn't ever want to be assigned. (Laughs) As well as some to which I would like to be assigned.

It was a great experience for a young officer. In 1962, I was 32. I entered the Service at age 23, quite young.

But that Bowlesian era, those two years, basically, two and a half years, I guess, was really the watershed of my professional life. It really changed my whole view of the Service, of the inter-agency world, of the way in which diplomacy is conducted, of the way in which the White House and the State Department relate to each other. The vantage point of being on the seventh floor, and in the middle, if you will, of this rather titanic series of policy and personality clashes that went on in the Kennedy Administration, being in meetings with all of these historic figures gave me some insights into government that were just absolutely something you could never have even bargained for or gotten in any other fashion.

It's one of the things that's always convinced me it's very important to try to get a seventh floor staff position early in your career, if you can. You get to understand so much better the way Washington really operates and what's then relevant when you're in the field to send to Washington, how to make it effective.

Q: Very important.

LEWIS: You can't ever explain it to anybody; you have to observe it and live with it in order to absorb it.

Q: If you know the seventh floor, if you send a cable, as an ambassador, you know where it's going to move.

LEWIS: You learn the importance of timing, of coming in with recommendations at moments when there is a receptivity and a need for them, what will happen to them if you send them at other moments when there's no such felt need, and so forth. And you learn how to use the back channel, and you find out about the political bureaucratic interface and how a career officer has to understand the political side of the government, take it seriously, and not just reject it.

One thing that's really troubled me over the years, Peter, in my career, is how many career people resent the fact that politicians meddle in our business, and reject learning how to work with them and make the thing work. After all, government is politics. Presidents have a right to employ many people from outside the career, and sometimes they're damn good and sometimes they're better than a careerist in certain spots. There are also some terrible cases. But I never felt that we ought to have only career ambassadors. I really got that sense from my time with Bowles.

One of the projects that I ran for Bowles who carried it out for Kennedy, was a very thorough assessment of every ambassador then serving, how he was doing his job, how his country team thought he was doing in his job, how he worked with his senior staff, and how he worked with the policy mechanism. We prepared a huge review of every embassy in the world for the President, quite outside the system. It involved a lot of travel, a lot of very confidential interviews, and the result was a number of changes in ambassadors—not

punitive changes, but fitting better people into the right places. Often they're in the wrong holes, the wrong pegs in the wrong holes.

I saw that some of the career people were lousy, and some of the political people were very good, and then vice versa. You couldn't generalize based on backgrounds, except somebody who had no foreign affairs experience was not likely to be much good. You take a fellow like Bowles himself in India, or like Jim Loeb, who was ambassador in Peru at the time, somebody Bowles had picked, who came from a journalistic background, Bill Attwood in Guinea, a journalist. Businessmen with international experience, journalists, and academics were the “political” appointees that the Kennedy Administration sent out. One of the jobs Bowles did have under the Rusk era was to select ambassadors, basically to run the ambassadorial selection. Rusk got involved on a few that he was particularly interested in, particularly East Asia. Otherwise, he left it pretty much to Bowles, and Bowles worked with the White House staff.

We had a high percentage of career people, but we also had a lot of non-career who came from disciplines which are aligned professionally, have international dimensions, and some very good ones came out of that process. So ever since, I've been very testy and not very tolerant of the traditional Foreign Service view that the Foreign Service owns all the ambassadors' jobs, and any that go elsewhere are only for political payoffs. I think it's clear that from a career standpoint, we need to have a high percentage of ambassadorships of career, because you have to have career goals for people to aspire to. But if you can pick up a David Bruce or a “Chet” Bowles or many others, or Mike Mansfield in Tokyo today, with different backgrounds and something very important to contribute that a career man can't necessarily have, including the personal relationship with the President, that strengthens our diplomacy; it doesn't weaken it. That's one of the main things I learned from “Chet.”

I went to Princeton, I spent a year there, and then I worked out a “detail assignment” to AID. I wanted to find out what economic development was really like in our AID missions. I

had been writing speeches for “Chet” about development and looking at the big picture of development policy, but I didn't have any real sense of how it really worked on the ground. So I volunteered for the then-called Alliance for Progress in Latin America, where the interface between politics and economics was very consciously up front and where the AID programs were being carried out in Latin America in those very idealistic first years of the Kennedy period.

Q: Did you find Princeton a useful intermediary thing?

LEWIS: Very useful. It was a terrific year.

Q: As valuable or more valuable than going to the National War College?

LEWIS: I never went to the War College. Later on, I went to the Senior Seminar, and that was an extraordinary year also. They were two different experiences. I'd say they were both very valuable. I was able to improve my economic skills at Princeton. The sabbatical year away from Washington was very good for us as a family and me professionally. I was glad to get a look at academia up close again. It only reconfirmed my feeling that I really didn't want to stay in academia, but it was a delightful way to spend a year, stretching. It gave me a chance to read infinitely beyond what I'd been able to for a long time.

I went off then to Brazil on loan to AID as a program officer in the AID mission. I had arranged that assignment. I knew the then-Deputy Assistant Secretary and Coordinator of the Alliance for Progress, Bill Rogers, and had gotten to know him through my work with “Chet.” So when I volunteered for a job in the Alliance, he was anxious to have me, and they worked out this assignment.

I spent almost three years in Rio. The capital was still in Rio effectively in those days, though technically it was already in Brasilia. The ministries hadn't moved. After about a year and a half in the AID mission, I was moved to the Embassy to work for Jack Tuthill,

who had come in to replace Linc Gordon—Linc Gordon was ambassador when I went down—and then Tuthill, from a European background, came to replace him.

Q: Tuthill was career, and Lincoln Gordon wasn't?

LEWIS: Lincoln Gordon had an academic background. That's right. He's been in the New Deal, also, basically an economic development scholar, a very powerful ambassador, as it turned out. He had been there for two or three years when I arrived. He was there during the coup or revolutionary takeover, when the military overthrew Goulart in 1963, just before we went down in 1964. The military were already in control by the time we arrived.

Jack Tuthill, after about a year and a half, came in, and he had a rather weak DCM, who was extremely good on political affairs, Phil Raine. He had been political counselor years earlier, and had come back as DCM in a way like Outerbridge Horsey had done in Italy. He was still the political counselor in his own mind, and he was only interested, really, in that side of the work.

Tuthill needed somebody to kind of run the embassy, and he asked me to come over as his so-called “Executive Officer”. He created a new job in the front office, made me a sort of junior-grade DCM called executive officer. I actually supervised for him the consular section, the military attach#s, the science attach#, two or three other parts of the embassy, while the DCM concerned himself with the political and economic sections and one or two other things that he enjoyed. That was a terrifically good experience for me, obviously, still at a pretty young age. I spent the last part of my tour in Rio, therefore, there.

Incidentally, when I arrived in Rio as a program officer, Frank Carlucci, now the Secretary of Defense, was the number two in the political section, and we became close friends. Then when I moved to Tuthill's office, he was still number two in the political section. We worked closely together on a lot of projects.

I had to leave prematurely. I was going to go back for a second tour, but my mother became very ill with cancer, and I was the only son, and we really just needed to get back to the United States to try to look after her, so I asked for a transfer back to Washington. Frank then took over the executive officer job from me, and I went back to the Brazil desk, where I became deputy director for both AID and State. We had an integrated bureau at that time in Latin American Affairs. AID and State, as in the field, were integrated, so you had some AID officers as country directors, and State officers as deputies, and vice versa, in mixed staffs. I was the deputy director with an AID officer, Jack Kubisch, who was the office director at that time. Jack had been, earlier, the AID mission director in Brazil when I first arrived there.

I want to say this about Brazil. My experience in the AID mission was really invaluable. In some ways it was, once again, a kind of new world. They were different kind of people. Evaluating projects, traveling around, looking at what AID was actually doing, and struggling with the budgets, trying to figure out how to mesh theory with practice, how to deal with the Brazilian bureaucracy in ways that you could see some eventual product out of the money, and relating to a different bureaucracy, all of this was very educational, and I enjoyed it. We didn't have any real representation responsibilities in the AID mission. We didn't have to go to a lot of cocktail parties, which I never have liked. We spent our social lives very much privately, with the Brazilians and with some of our AID friends and some friends in the embassy. As in too many places, there was kind of a first-class and second-class citizenship there, and if you were “of the embassy,” then you were regarded as kind of a cut above those AID people or those Peace Corps people. But because I stayed with the AID people, I was neither fish nor fowl. And every now and then we would get invited to the Residence, to help entertain visiting firemen, and the other AID people wouldn't, and they couldn't quite understand why, but they really weren't that jealous anyway, because they didn't like cocktail parties much better than I did.

Q: Was the military regime not as difficult as some on that continent?

LEWIS: In those days, particularly the first years, '64, '65, '66, '67, the military governed with a pretty light hand. That is, there was no question who was in charge; the politicians took their orders. The bureaucracy took its orders. There were relatively little, you might say, human rights issues at that time. It was not a brutal regime, nothing like what happened in Argentina or in Chile. They got rougher later on, but they were never anything like as bad. Part of it is the Brazilian temperament, the Brazilian lifestyle, and the tradition of the Brazilian military, but it was not a repressive regime. You really didn't know you were living under a military regime, except that the president was a general and the legislature had been dissolved.

Q: You could get along with the bureaucracy just as well as with Goulart. It was the same bureaucracy.

LEWIS: Actually, from the point of view of an aid-giving country or the U.S. Embassy, trying to help encourage a lot of reforms in a social system, you got along much better with the military, because they were a lot more efficient. The Goulart regime and its predecessor, the Kubitschek Government, particularly the Goulart period was just chaotic. What had happened was that the trade unions had been stomped on and almost eliminated, so that economic reform by technocrats was made easier, the civilian technocrats who had the key positions in the government under the military umbrella. They could carry out those reforms a lot more easily, not having a powerful political left to deal with or powerful labor movement to deal with. In the long run, it had many drawbacks, but in terms of operating with the government, we had very cooperative, good relations with the Ministers of Finance, Ministers of Planning, and so forth, all of whom had their political power from the military, but the operators were civilians, and they were technically able.

I thought Brazil was a fascinating place and a depressing place, in the sense that the social problems and the social agenda is just unmanageable.

Q: It still is, isn't it?

LEWIS: It still is. It's no better 30 years later. I was back there two years ago, and I was very depressed to see how Rio has slid backwards in certain respects, and as far as the social gap is concerned, crime is up a great deal. But there's also a huge economic dynamo that's part of Brazil, and it's really a continent, not a country. It's a world unto its own. Brazilians are delightful people to work with.

Q: Did you ever get any chance to do any theater work there?

LEWIS: No, we didn't do any theater work in Brazil. We did a little later, however.

We came back to Washington in 1967, and my mother didn't live a great deal longer, as it turned out. I went to the Brazilian office for a while and helped to manage the AID program and the economic side of the work, particularly, from the Washington end.

Then one day in mid-1968, lo and behold, I was asked if I would go over to the White House to the NSC staff, and take over that Latin American account for Walt Rostow, then Johnson's National Security Advisor. So I was in the White House during the final months of the Johnson Administration.

Q: Viron Vaky had been there before?

LEWIS: No, Vaky came after. He replaced me.

Q: Bowdler?

LEWIS: I replaced Bill Bowdler, that's right. Bill Bowdler had been in that job through most of the Johnson Administration, and had done a very good job.

Q: He'd replaced Jorden.

LEWIS: He'd replaced Bill Jorden, that's right. Then Bill was going out as ambassador somewhere.

Q: To Panama.

LEWIS: To Panama. Yes, at that stage. So they had to replace him. It was a one-man NSC account handling Latin America, with a couple of secretaries. Once again, exactly why they sent me, I never precisely knew, but it was a good opportunity to see how the White House was functioning in those days. I was getting a little bored after four of five years of Brazil.

So I went over. Walt Rostow was then the NSC advisor, and he was quite preoccupied with Vietnam. 1968 was the year of disaster, as far as the administration. Johnson had already withdrawn from the re-election campaign, and Humphrey was running at that stage. You had the Chicago convention riots. It was a very grim time, as you remember.

But for me, it was fun and interesting to see how the White House and NSC worked. And I must say this, in those days, Walt was very good about making all of us feel like we were part of the White House staff, not just the NSC staff over there across the driveway. So as you recall, it was a nice atmosphere, a nice working atmosphere within the staff. You really felt like you were part of a team and were taken seriously, and what little time Johnson had for Latin America, and Rostow was interested in Latin American development, particularly. We had a couple of projects that I spent some time on, and they were interesting.

But mainly it was fascinating just being there during the transition. When the Nixon Administration was elected, I was told, along with everybody else, that Kissinger was coming in, and he wanted a totally new team. But there was a problem in my case. Pete Vaky, who was at that point the Acting Assistant Secretary for Latin America, for whom I had worked when I was in the bureau before, had been picked by Kissinger to be the NSC senior staff member for Latin America, and they were going to add a second position, which Arnie Nachmanoff took, also somebody I had worked very closely with when he was at State. So these were guys that I had been dealing with from the NSC side, and we had a very good, smooth working relationship with the ARA bureau.

But Vaky couldn't just leave and come over until they had appointed a new Assistant Secretary, and you know it takes any new administration months to get their act together and get people cleared through the Congress. Vaky had to stay over in State. So Kissinger asked me just to stay on and hold the fort until Vaky could get loose, which meant that I was there for about three months into the Nixon Administration, and watched the transition of Rostow to Kissinger as something more than a fly on the wall in the staff meetings. Kissinger didn't take Latin America seriously at that point; he was busy with many other things. So I didn't have a lot to do with Kissinger, but I was in his staff meetings and watched all of the unfolding of the drama of that new Kissinger era.

Q: And the vast increase.

LEWIS: And the vast increase in staff as the members about tripled in the course of a month.

Then I went back to State in early 1969. John Crimmins, who was then Deputy Assistant Secretary, brought me into the ARA front office and Charlie Mann, the new Assistant Secretary from the private sector (Sears), asked me to be a kind of policy planning assistant for him. I then served as Special Assistant for Policy Planning for Latin America in the bureau for about a year. It was always understood that I would become a Deputy Assistant Secretary in this role, but somehow there were problems about creating additional deputy assistant secretary slots, and it didn't come about.

Nonetheless, I had some very interesting work. We were trying to design a whole new Latin America policy for the Nixon Administration. We carried one of those NSSM studies, NSSM 15, which I ran on an inter-agency basis, and came up with a lot of the basic principles that ultimately did form the new approach of the Nixon administration.

One of the most interesting aspects of running that study was that there was a Defense Department representative named Brent Scowcroft, who was representing DOD on my

working group. That's when I first met General Scowcroft, who, of course, ultimately became Kissinger's deputy and then NSC advisor under Ford, one of the brightest and ablest people I ever ran into in the government. I thought from the beginning that he was going to be destined for high office because he had such an unusual political skills and way of operating. He was quite different from a lot of the representatives we had in this group.

After about a year in doing that policy planning job for ARA, I went to the Senior Seminar and spent a year there, a fabulous year, really a great chance to get around the United States. You get to know more about American society, which was one of the best parts of that year.

Q: Who ran that seminar? It was under FSI, wasn't it?

LEWIS: Yes, it is under FSI. Former ambassador Elbert Matthews, who has subsequently died. We had a good class, not brilliant, but a good class of about 30 of us.

Q: You had guest speakers and made many trips?

LEWIS: Many trips around the United States to all sorts of places—labor unions, police forces, universities, cotton fields, industry, city government. And we really got a view of our own country that none of us had ever had before, which I think is a terrific advantage for senior Foreign Service people to get.

Q: It's a far cry from the old days. There was that Foreign Service officer who had 27 years abroad, with no home leave, or he didn't choose any, and he ended up as ambassador to Afghanistan, then retired to Spain. Angus Ward.

LEWIS: Ambassador to Afghanistan?

Q: That was the only ambassadorship he got, but he'd been in Manchuria, Harbin, before and during World War II.

LEWIS: He was consul in Harbin, and then a prisoner of the Japanese all during the war. I've lectured at the War College a number of times, and they have a swell program, but quite honestly, I think the Senior Seminar program is better from what I know of it, because it's small. There are only 30 people, and a great esprit built up. Because it is small, it can be very flexible in the program, and they spend a whole lot of it on domestic problems, though we had, each one of us, a special project involving foreign travel and independent research. That turned out to be very valuable.

I had had very little exposure to Asia by this time, though I'd been to Tokyo, Bangkok, Cambodia and the Philippines with “Chet” and one or two other places. I really didn't know much at all about Asia. So I decided I would do a research project on the role of the Japanese in reconquering markets and economic influence around the Asian rimland. I went to Japan, spent a couple of weeks there, talking with people in ministries, getting around the country. Then I went to about eight or ten countries around the Asian rimland, and tried to look at the impact the Japanese economic resurgence was having on the politics and attitudes of those countries, many of which had suffered a great deal under Japanese rule.

I wrote a study called “The Yellow Yankee,” which, I must say, like all Senior Seminar studies, never really get far beyond the archives of the Senior Seminar, but I predicted really quite a long time before it became fashionable the way in which the Japanese were beating us out of those Asian markets, the reasons they were doing it, the corporate problems of U.S. business which they revealed, and the complicated political impact that was already, back in 1971, beginning to have.

Q: People who followed you, like Vogel at Harvard and Prestowitz, made a lot of money on your ideas.

LEWIS: (Laughs) I know it. Well, I don't think they had my ideas, but it became a very popular subject some years later.

After a year in the Senior Seminar, I went to work for a year as a special assistant to the director general of the Foreign Service and to Bill Macomber simultaneously. Bill was then Deputy Under Secretary for Management. The reason I went to work there was while I was still in the Senior Seminar, Macomber had set up a series of 13 task forces to reassess all aspects of the State Department personnel system. I had been asked to head the one on training, which I had done part-time from the Seminar. Then I was asked to take on the job of seeing that all these task force reports got implemented, reporting both to the DG and to Macomber. I spent the next year in that heartbreakingly unsuccessful effort. We got a few things changed, but not enough.

Q: Who was DG then?

LEWIS: John Burns. Burns couldn't care less about personnel reform, but he was the nicest guy in the world and didn't give me any problems, and he was very loyal to Macomber. It was really Macomber's program, it was his dynamism and set of ideas. Two or three of us worked closely with him as a task force, and tried to put into effect the work of all these good task forces that were put together from career officers. We got a number of changes in recruitment and training and promotion practices, but like so many reform programs, it was only partially implemented, and the bureaucracy resisted at every step of the way. Some of the recommendations were kind of half-baked, undoubtedly. But there was a great sense of relief when Macomber ultimately moved on to other matters.

Q: Had he been ambassador to Jordan yet?

LEWIS: He had already been ambassador to Jordan. He was, actually, Assistant Secretary for Congressional Affairs earlier, but he'd come back into government directly to this top management job. He was an explosive character with an incredible temper, which

he would explode all over people around him. I figured out early on that the only way to deal with Bill, when he got in those moods, was just to give it back at him equally hard, and then he would settle down. But if he found out that he could bully you, he just would.

Q: He didn't do that at the Metropolitan Museum, I don't think.

LEWIS: I suspect he had mellowed some by the time he got to that job, but he sure did it in the State Department. He was a creative guy and full of a lot of good ideas, and quite effective on the Hill. His sort of ruffian style was quite effective up there. But career people never really knew quite how to deal with it. His temper was one of the reasons. It was pretty unbridled. He never caused me any great problem, because I just yelled back at him a few times, and then he left me alone, and we dealt with each other normally.

That went on for a year, and then I got a chance to go overseas again. It was obviously time to do it. I had been in Washington, by this time, about five years. I was eager to get back in the field, and I wanted to get to Asia. I never had gotten there. I wanted management responsibility, and I wanted to go someplace where there was an AID program, because I'd had AID experience, and I was very interested in the question of integrating the tools of diplomacy under an ambassador. I wanted a DCM job, obviously, in a country with a significant AID effort. It turned out there were two possibilities that were available: one was Malaysia, which didn't have much of an AID program, and Afghanistan, which had a very big USAID program and a big Peace Corps, and also was very exotic and far away.

By chance, I had been to Kabul with “Chet” Bowles on one of the trips to India, and had gone down through the Khyber Pass on the way out of the country by car, so I had a sense of what the country was like, and I thought it would be fascinating. So I jumped at the Afghan job and went there as deputy to Bob Neumann, who had already been there as ambassador for about five years by that point and was a real expert on the country.

He had come from academic life, a professor at UCLA for years, but he also was quite a political animal, strong and hardy.

Q: Still is.

LEWIS: Still is. He turned out to be a super ambassador. We worked very well together. He was ideal for Afghanistan. He had a real touch for dealing with monarchies, particularly, and he went on and did very well in Morocco for the same reason, and later would have done well in Saudi Arabia, except he said the wrong thing after he'd been there a month about Al Haig, and it got back to Al Haig, and so his ambassadorship to Saudi Arabia lasted, I think, 40 days before he was canned. But he really did have an excellent rapport with the King and the government, and understood the way to deal with the kind of feudal tribal monarchy. I learned a great deal from Bob, and he gave me a lot of responsibility in running the embassy, and trying to coordinate this far-flung AID program that we had. My AID background helped, because the AID people didn't look on me totally as an interloper. I had more credibility and could discuss their problems with them with quite a bit more credibility than some of my colleagues.

There again, I come back to this point. I think it is terribly important for political officers, if they can find a way to do it, to get some experience with other agencies, and understand the problems, because later on when you get to be an ambassador or DCM, you're really responsible for the whole U.S. operation. You can't just be the State Department's ambassador if you want to be effective and if you want to carry out the mandate of the President, the law. If the other agency reps look on you as somebody interested in their problems and knowledgeable about them and willing to fight some of their battles with their bureaucracies in Washington, they will then be much more loyal and supportive of the total mission in the country. That we had going for us in Afghanistan, together with Neumann's real leadership skills. We had a country team that was very loyal to him and really quite well articulated.

It was an exciting period, in a way, because we were there at the time of the old monarchy, but there was the coup in the summer of '73. Neumann was on home leave, and I was in charge. Old Prince Daoud, who had been in disgrace and sort of under house arrest for many years, after having been prime minister for many years before that, had been plotting successfully with some elements in the military. While the King was out of the country on holiday in Italy, along with his son-in-law, Abdul Wali, who was the real military power behind the throne, Daoud's people, in an almost bloodless coup, took over. There was a little shooting right around the embassy, because the palace was right down the street, but nobody in the American community was hurt. There was excitement for a few days. We didn't know what was happening. Our contacts, all of a sudden, disappeared. But it was an interesting experience for me, being in charge of an embassy at a time of some considerable crisis and tension and danger.

Q: Was there any signs in the distance, way back then, of traditional Russian expansionism?

LEWIS: We played this game with the Russians throughout those years in Afghanistan. The Soviets had a huge AID program of their own, many thousands of technicians. We had nearly 1,000 and a large Peace Corps of several hundred. Their AID program, however, was bigger. It was concentrated in different parts of the country, and they had a big military training program in the army. We had a small military training program, very small. We brought a few Afghan officers here to the States for training. But the Afghans were very anxious to really remain neutral. They wanted us there as much as they could get us there, as a counterweight to the Soviets.

Continuation of interview: September 23, 1988

Q: Good afternoon, Ambassador Lewis. It's nice to be here again after a lapse of a month and a half. As we can see from the transcript in front of us, you were dealing with Afghanistan when we left off. I believe you had a few additional remarks to make on that.

LEWIS: Yes. I just wanted to go on and say a word about this question of Russia-Afghan relations which we touched on at the very end. As I indicated, there was quite a lot of competition between our programs in Afghanistan and the Russian programs, though theirs was much bigger. The Afghans were playing throughout that era a very skillful game of balance to maintain their independence, despite their very energetic neighbor to the north, whom they've always had great distrust of, indeed, hatred of, by keeping as much of an American presence as possible, but keeping the American presence in the economic area where it wouldn't be seen by the Russians as any military or strategic threat to them. We, of course, had a small military training program. We brought a few Afghan officers to the United States, a handful, but the main part of the Afghan military were trained by the Russians.

Afghan leaders, the King and Prince Daoud, when he was prime minister in earlier years, had always done a great deal to reassure the Russians that they were in no way hostile to the Soviet Union, and tried not to provoke them, tried to be seen as genuinely neutral, leaning perhaps a little bit to the north. It's always puzzled me, in a way, that some years after I left Afghanistan in early 1974, the Russians decided that to protect their interests, they had to invade and, in effect, take over the country for a number of years. It was a kind of miscalculation about the Afghans, that it's almost impossible to understand how they made such a miscalculation. They knew the country very well, they were there in large numbers, they had many Russian agents in the country, and they knew the Afghan character. It seems strange that they wouldn't have realized that the way in which they tried to turn Afghanistan into a puppet regime with a large occupying force of Soviet soldiers, was inevitably going to stimulate an enormous Afghan Nationalist reaction. I guess they underestimated how tough the Afghan rebels would be in the long run, but it strikes me they shouldn't have made that miscalculation. If they were going to try to take over the country in order to shore up a failing Communist regime that came in after a later coup, I would have thought they would have known that they had to put in a whole lot more

troops than they ever used in Afghanistan, in order to have a chance of really subjugating the country permanently.

Q: Would you say that this was a Moscow calculation, disregarding solid advice that was available, similar to Washington miscalculations, despite good advice?

LEWIS: We really had no way of knowing, but it seems that's very possible. I think a few things I've seen recently about things which have been coming out in the Gorbachev era, about the Afghan decision, suggest that they have realized that some military figures in particular made some really incredible miscalculations about what it would take to subdue Afghanistan, and gave very bad advice to the politicians. It remains a mystery to me, though.

In any case, that coup took place in the summer of 1973, and Daoud took power while the King was in Italy, proclaimed a republic, and made himself president. In fact, it was really a monarchy just called a republic, and the institutions changed barely at all. It seems to me he did dissolve the Parliament, which was a weak but functioning institution, and his own Oriental-style intelligence system became extremely active in rooting out and throwing in jail and treating very badly a lot of supporters of the King and, more importantly, people who had not been very nice to Daoud in recent years. But he functioned really like an Oriental monarch. He was a very shrewd, wily fellow, and during those last six or seven months that I was there, in the first months of the Daoud regime, our relations got rather tense for quite a while. We had no good contacts left except one or two of his friends who we had been fairly close to, even while he was out of power, one of whom turned up as acting foreign minister in the new government.

It was very difficult to find out what was really going on in Afghanistan, having very rudimentary institutions, the press and media, and everybody being scared to death of being seen with foreigners, in general, not just Americans. Our contacts dried up for quite

a while. They were beginning to stick their heads up again about the time that I left in February, 1974.

Meanwhile, Ted Eliot came and replaced Bob Neumann as ambassador toward the end of 1973, and I served with Ted for a couple of months as his DCM. Then all of a sudden, out of a clear blue sky, along in mid-January of 1974, I had a telephone call from Washington one day from Winston Lord, who was the new director of the policy planning staff. He had been a close staff member with Henry Kissinger at the White House on the NSC staff, and when Kissinger came over as Secretary of State in the autumn of 1973, he brought Lord over with him and made him head of the planning staff. Winston was reorganizing the staff and upgrading it, because Kissinger wanted to use it much more rigorously than it had been used by Bill Rogers. He asked me if I would come back and be his deputy. He wanted to have a mixture of career people and non-career experts. Where he had gotten my name, I have no idea, but he asked me to come back to Washington and talk to him about it. So I flew back, was very impressed with Lord and with the way Kissinger apparently intended to use the policy planning staff, so I accepted and left early in February 1974, leaving my wife and kids in Kabul to finish out the school term. They were both in the American School. As a matter of fact, my wife was directing a play at the time for the Kabul Amateur Dramatic Society, which we were both very active in. “Music Man” was going to be produced later in the spring, so for a variety of reasons, she stayed on in Kabul for about three months after I went back to Washington.

I then spent from February 1974 until December of 1975, close to two years, as the senior deputy in the policy planning staff. This was really an extraordinarily fascinating period for me, because Kissinger did indeed have a great deal of confidence in Lord personally, and therefore, took the policy planning staff quite seriously. He was one of those secretaries, one of the relatively few Secretary of State we've had, with an academic background, and therefore real interest in the sort of longer range planning and analysis papers, which planning staffs tend to produce. In the early period, in particular, Kissinger would meet us once every three or four weeks, for long periods, with all of us on the staff, to discuss

a think piece which we had produced on some aspect of policy that he was particularly intrigued with. We had a lot of interaction with him. He was an extraordinarily complicated person to work for, fascinating, difficult, stimulating, but never dull.

Q: Quite irascible?

LEWIS: Quite irascible. Fortunately, Winston knew how to work with him and handle him, so I think we were probably in the best place in the State Department, from an individual's point of view, during the Kissinger era.

One thing Kissinger liked to do was to use his speeches, which he made quite often, as major policy-making vehicles. He had a technique which I came to admire as I understood it better, of using the process of producing a major speech to force a policy decision out of the government system, and the speech writing function was also lodged in the policy planning staff. In fact, we had one officer on the staff who was pretty much a full-time speechwriter, it happened to be in the early days, Mark Palmer, the Soviet specialist, but Winston Lord himself was a first-class speechwriter, and he would also participate very much in the speech process. Whenever a speech on a major topic was being prepared, several of us would sit with Kissinger and get his ideas, and then the speechwriters would turn out a draft, and then we would go back and discuss them, chop it to pieces or throw it away and start over again. I think as has been reported elsewhere, there were occasions when speeches would go through as many as 20 or 25 drafts in that process before you'd get one that Henry would then take himself and go off and work on and really turn into his own speech. But before that, you had gone through a laborious process of honing his ideas into the speechwriter's words and ideas from the policy planning staff, as well.

For example, Kissinger wanted to get more into the economic policy making of the government. There was an occasion when he was to make a speech at the United Nations before a special UN conference on Third World economic issues. He decided to use this as a way of getting some more flexible policy decisions out of the Treasury and elsewhere,

so he deliberately got us to write into the speech a number of policy initiatives which went well beyond the positions of the government up to that point. Tom [Thomas D.] Enders, who was at that time Assistant Secretary for Economic Affairs, also worked very closely with Henry on that speech and with us, and he was then the point man for taking the draft speech and trying to clear it around the government in all the right agencies and in the White House.

Q: Were there many people who dared to say, "This is crap. Let's eliminate that"?

LEWIS: Oh, sure, there were lots of fights over a lot of individual kinds of questions. This was a period, you probably recall, of the oil crisis, and what to do about the recycling of the tremendous amounts of American money that was going to the oil producers in those days was only one of many issues where there were big arguments between State and Treasury, between Henry and the Secretary of the Treasury, Bill Simon, who Henry could invariably outmaneuver.

It's very interesting, though, that this is only one of a dozen cases where Kissinger used the device of his having agreed to give a speech, to beat out of the system, if you will, endorsement for a policy. Then with as much agreement as he could obtain on the speech, he would then use the speech as the vehicle to get out of President Ford endorsement for whatever positions went beyond what he'd been able to clear through the bureaucracy. It's always brought home to me that speech making in the U.S. Government by senior officials is much more important than it seems, that it's used in that way. Kissinger's not the only one who's used that device, but I think he did it more skillfully than most.

I was in charge, overall, of managing the staff under Lord. We had about 22 or 23 very able officers covering each of the regions of the world and some functional experts, as well, on nuclear matters and disarmament and so forth. But I had a special responsibility also for the Middle East area and for Africa and Latin America within the staff complex.

That period, as you will recall, was also the time of Kissinger's high profile shuttle diplomacy in the Middle East after the 1973 Yom Kippur War. So I was writing and supervising production of a number of policy papers on Middle East negotiations that we were working on with the Bureau of Near East and South Asian Affairs, where Hal [Harold] Saunders and Roy Atherton were key players. At an earlier time, Joe [Joseph John] Sisco was still there. I wasn't directly involved in any of Kissinger's shuttles. I didn't go out with him on any of those trips, but I was very much involved in the papers back in Washington, in preparation for the trips and the ideas.

For example, I remember one occasion in the spring of 1975. Kissinger had already succeeded in negotiating the first withdrawal agreement with Egypt, the disengagement agreement of 1974, and a disengagement agreement with Syria for some withdrawal on the Syrian front. Then he went back to the question of a second step with Egypt in the spring of '75, and he carried on a long shuttle which deadlocked, and deadlocked, in Henry's mind, largely because of Israeli intransigence over further concessions. He was furious at the end of that shuttle, coming back to Washington empty handed, after having spent a couple of weeks, at least, perhaps longer, in the Middle East on that shuttle.

He was furious with the Israelis, felt that they were missing a great opportunity to secure another step in the direction of peace and get their own security solidified, and that Sadat was ready for much more than they were prepared to do. They were hung up not only over the issues themselves, but also internal arguments within the Israeli Government, which is pretty characteristic of the way the Israeli negotiators are generally hung up in these matters.So Henry came back to Washington fuming, and he announced on the airplane to the traveling press, that there would have to be a comprehensive reassessment of the situation, which was immediately interpreted by the Israelis and by the press as meaning we were going to exert a lot of pressure and leverage on Israel to give in. In fact, we did conduct, when he got back, a thorough reassessment of all of the negotiating

options within the government, and the policy planning staff played an important role in that review.

Basically, the key question was whether you continue to work for partial settlements or whether you, at this point, go ahead and try to work out a comprehensive settlement for all of the occupied territories and no more small steps. Kissinger had about come to the conclusion that it was so difficult to get the Israelis to give concessions in the small-step mode, that it would be better to make a major effort and use whatever leverage we could muster, to try to settle the whole range of outstanding issues.

There had been no decision reached as to whether to go for a comprehensive approach or go back and have another try at completing another staged withdrawal, but before he had really gotten to the decision point formally, word of this “reassessment” had spread widely around Washington through leaks from the press and elsewhere. That stimulated a lot of concern by the many friends of Israel in Congress and, of course, by the Israeli Government, then headed by Prime Minister Rabin of the Labor Party. So 76 senators wrote a letter to President Ford, essentially warning him not to try to use political, military, and economic aid leverage to force the Israelis to do something which they would see as jeopardizing their security. This was such a massive warning shot across Kissinger's bow that he never went ahead with the idea of trying for a comprehensive settlement. I think he might have tried it had it not been for that, though he really hadn't come to a final decision.

It's interesting, because later on in the Carter Administration, when Carter came in, he started out on that comprehensive approach which Kissinger had been about to conclude he needed to do himself five years earlier.

Q: You say Kissinger was warned off. He was rather contemptuous of Congress on occasion, wasn't he? But this was a strong number, the 76.

LEWIS: Seventy-six senators is an overwhelming number of senators and carries a lot of political weight. That letter which, of course, had been drafted and circulated by friends of

Israel on the Hill was very effective in warning Ford and Kissinger that if it were necessary to threaten to reduce aid, to cut off aid in order to get Israeli agreement on very large withdrawals on various fronts to reach a comprehensive settlement, it was very likely that Congress would balk and you'd have a donnybrook within the U.S. Government, which would undercut totally the effectiveness of Kissinger's diplomacy. It's not the only time that such letters have been written, but that, I think, was the largest number of senators that had been gotten on such letters to that point. But down through the years, there have been several other occasions when the administration has been about to do something or thinking of doing something, and a number of senators or congressmen or both have gotten disturbed and written collective letters to the administration to warn them off pursuing that course.

That was, as I said, a fascinating period for me, because I was in on a lot of high policy stuff, not just about the Middle East, but really most areas of the world. Because of Lord's relationship with Kissinger, I was in a lot of sensitive meetings and materials that I might not have been in otherwise.

Q: Would you say that that was sort of the hey-day of the policy planning staff? Because through the years, it's had its ups and downs.

LEWIS: I think this was really one of the high spots for it. A lot of it really came down to the fact that Kissinger had a bent for using a planning staff and Lord had his confidence so much, that we could play that role. I think those are the key two factors that have to be there. Other secretaries have had very good chiefs of policy planning. They weren't personally as close, or the Secretary didn't have the intellectual interest in dealing with broad, long-range issues, wanting to deal instead with cases on a case-by-case basis as they come along. The fact that Kissinger was not a lawyer, I think, contributed to his different kind of approach. Most of our Secretaries of State have been lawyers.

There's always a tension when the planning staff is strong between it and the regional bureaus. They're very jealous of their policy role and very jealous of running the policy toward their areas and resent the planning staff. We had our problems at times with some bureaus. We were not just writing long-range papers; our staff were all in on all major current issues acting as a devil's advocate in critiquing and sending in alternate views on positions which the bureaus were recommending. Kissinger tended frequently to listen to us, but Winston was very good at working personally with the assistant secretaries and trying to get them to understand that the planning staff could be allies and were not enemies. So our staff members, for the most part, would work closely with their counterparts in the regional bureaus, make important contributions to the bureau product. We did a lot of joint papers with the bureaus, and then we also played a separate devil's advocate role at times, as well.

Lord was particularly expert himself in East Asian policy, which was his area of specialization. He worked very closely with the Assistant Secretary of East Asia, and they were almost co-equal in key policies with respect to China, in particular, in that era and, to a lesser extent, Japan. We didn't get very much into Southeast Asian matters. This was the end of the Vietnam War, it was winding down. In fact, it finally wound down while I was in the planning staff watching the very sad events in the evacuation of Saigon.

Kissinger's dynamic role as a spokesman for the administration was extraordinary in that period. In part, it stemmed from the fact that Nixon was increasingly preoccupied with his own Watergate crisis and, of course, then resigned toward the end of the summer of '74. Then Ford came in and Kissinger moved to the State Department, and Ford relied very heavily on Henry as “prime minister for foreign policy.” That would probably be a good way to describe it, in fact. I don't think the Secretary of State has ever been as powerful in the government structure as a whole since John Foster Dulles' time, and even there, I think Dulles was not as powerful vis-#-vis Eisenhower, as Kissinger was vis-#-vis Ford. So that period was a kind of high point for State Department role in the government system,

and the policy planning staff was at its apex within the State Department. So it was a very exciting time for me to be there.

Along toward the end of 1975, Bill [William B.] Buffum, who was our Assistant Secretary for International Organizations, UN Affairs, retired and went to take a senior job with the United Nations Secretariat as Under Secretary for Political Affairs in New York. He retired from the U.S. Government.

I was quite stunned, really, one day. I was happily going about my business when Winston asked me to come in, and said Henry was thinking about appointing me as Assistant Secretary for I.O., and how did I feel about it. I really didn't know much at all about the United Nations system. I had never worked in New York, I'd never been involved in UN affairs, except to the extent that our work in policy planning staff every now and then had something to do with UN matters, and I'd worked on a couple of UN speeches for Henry, and some of the issues in the General Assembly and the Security Council had swung by the policy planning staff, especially Middle East issues. But I really knew very little about it, and I was quite taken aback. But it sounded like a very interesting kind of challenge, and to be an assistant secretary clearly was not to be sneezed at. So I said, “Sure, I'll try it. I don't know what I can do with it.”

At that time, Pat [Patrick] Moynihan was our representative in New York, and he was a real bull in a china shop to most of the people in I.O. and in our mission. He is an extraordinarily eloquent and firey kind of orator, brilliant, an interesting man. I had known him earlier when he was ambassador to India. I found out early on that he and Henry had some real problems in relating to each other. They both regarded the United Nations from rather the same point of view—that is, they didn't see it as the main arena for U.S. foreign policy-making at all, but they did see it as an important arena for public advocacy of American positions, and they thought it was an ideological battleground of some importance, Pat more than Henry. Henry would just as soon have had very little heard from New York, but be able to use it as a pulpit for American speeches

occasionally that he would decide to deliver. Moynihan had come to see it as a real ideological battleground between East and West, and a place where we had too long neglected the ideological struggle with the Soviets and with some possible Third World elements. He was determined to try to get it to pay attention to U.S. concerns again, as the General Assembly, in particular, had not been doing for some time before. On the specific issues themselves, they tended to be quite in agreement, but it was a matter of difference in style in how you regarded the UN.

Q: Who appointed Moynihan?

LEWIS: Moynihan, a Democrat, had been appointed by President Ford as a gesture of bipartisanship. He was an old friend of Henry's. I think, in fact, Kissinger was probably largely responsible for Pat's selection.

They both have huge egos, and both are men of great talent. Whenever they were together, they were elaborately careful of each other, and so Moynihan would come to Washington to talk about a UN issue, Kissinger would handle him with great skill and send him back to New York, thinking that Henry was in agreement with the way Pat was going to pursue an issue. Then he would get a hold of his assistant secretary—that was me from December of '75 on—and give me instructions on how to keep Moynihan under control, and tell me that I should stop him from doing the very things which he had just gotten through, in effect, blessing! When Moynihan would send down a recommendation or tell Washington in a cable or over the phone what he intended to say on an issue, to get Kissinger's agreement on a major issue, Kissinger would frequently blow up and explode all over me and the telephone, rant and rave, and tell me to get a hold of Moynihan and stop him immediately from breaking all this crockery by antagonizing the Russians at the very moment that Henry had some back-door deal going with them on some other subject. Or Moynihan would be pursuing sort of tactical maneuver in New York that didn't accord with Henry's rather Machiavellian quiet diplomacy somewhere else in the world.

So I would then call Moynihan, and in my most diplomatic way, try to tone down what he intended to do and convey Henry's views in a less provocative fashion. He would then explode and tell me to go back and tell Henry to go to hell—politely or even not politely. So I was the ham in the sandwich between the two of them for a number of months. They would never confront each other directly, either over the phone or in person. They would only do it through me, in order to maintain the relationship which had gone back, I guess, quite a long time at Harvard. It was a lot of fun. It was also a bit of a trial, to say the least.

Q: Isn't there a basic contradiction? What is the chain of command? Haven't some people at the UN thought they reported directly to the President, and bypassed the Assistant Secretary of State?

LEWIS: As far back as Henry Cabot Lodge in the Eisenhower Administration, the UN ambassador has had Cabinet rank given him. That's given him the impression that he could report directly to the President. No Secretary of State has ever liked that or been prepared, really, to do it that way, so that, in effect, in practice, the reporting chain is to the Assistant Secretary for I.O., and instructions formally usually go from I.O. to New York, as to the other UN missions around the world, in Geneva and Vienna and elsewhere. If it is a very important subject, usually the instruction is going to be cleared in the Secretary's office, if not from the Secretary, as well.But I was, in effect, the key link in the chain between New York and Washington. If Moynihan or anybody else, or Jeane Kirkpatrick in a later time, got so frustrated with the Secretary's views, since they were Cabinet members, they would occasionally try to go over the Secretary's head and get the President to overrule him. But you know, a powerful Secretary of State won't stand for that very often. Indeed, Henry wouldn't stand for it at all. Pat, as I recall, never really tried that. He knew better. I think he knew that Henry stood too well with Ford.

His successor, Bill [William] Scranton, who came in around March of April of '76, had a very much different style. These almost titanic arguments between Moynihan and Kissinger eventually began to get out in the public, and there were a couple of very

obviously planted nasty stories leaked in The New York Times and elsewhere about the way Moynihan was treated by Kissinger, or vice versa. Moynihan became convinced that there was a cabal on in the White House and around Henry to get rid of him, so as I recall, it was at the end of January or February of '76, he decided to resign and not allow himself to be chopped up by the usual Washington leak technique.

Bill Scranton was then named. Bill was an extraordinarily delightful man to work with. I have just great admiration for him. He told me once, incidentally, that Richard Nixon had three times tried to persuade him to become Secretary of State, and each time he had said no politely. When I asked him why, he said, “I just didn't like a lot of things about the Nixon Administration and didn't want to be a part of it,” which spoke very well of him. He didn't have any great ego problems; he was very comfortable with himself. He didn't have any great ambition to do more than to serve, and he also had a very smooth diplomatic style. Moynihan had succeeded while, I think, correctly pointing a lot of the weakness in American UN diplomacy and getting attention of the system for some of our legitimate complaints, he also antagonized a lot of the other nations' representatives up there. He had rather poor relations with a number of the delegations.

Scranton, when he came in, spent a lot of time cultivating the UN reps, and smoothed the waters a lot for our mission in New York in a period when it was having lots of troubles. He also, once in a while, would go to Ford quietly on an issue where he thought Kissinger was wrong. He worked carefully with Kissinger and really did handle himself with very great dignity and style throughout that year. The people who worked for him in the mission really just thought he was marvelous to work for, whereas people who were working for Moynihan, he brought in some people of his own, found him exciting but difficult, sort of volcanic to be around.

The period that I was Assistant Secretary for I.O. was heavily colored by the Middle East. Before I was even appointed in December of '75, I went to New York to meet the people in the mission. I had been named but, I guess, not confirmed at that point. I happened to

be in New York and attended a General Assembly session at which the General Assembly adopted this infamous resolution equating Zionism and racism. I was there when Chaim Herzog, who was then the Israeli representative, now the President of Israel, made really one of the great speeches made in New York, condemning that resolution. Moynihan gave an equally eloquent and stirring denunciation of the idea. But it passed substantially with Third World and Arab support. That triggered about a year of just continual fights in the UN over Israeli-related Middle East subjects.

The PLO, for the first time, was permitted to speak in the Security Council, and there was a huge argument within the U.S. Government about how we would handle that issue. We fought very hard against it, particularly the terms under which they were admitted to speak, which were as if they were a state, rather than as if they were a representative of an organization. We lost. It was a procedural issue, and in the Council there is no veto on procedural issues. So we lost because we could not veto. They did make their first appearance just about a week or two after I took over as assistant secretary.

There was a whole string of PLO issues in the Security Council in those first months, and there was a lot of tension between the NEA bureau, I.O., the Secretary's office, and New York about how to deal with these challenges. So I'd say about 50% of the time of the 15 months I was in that position, I was worrying or working on some aspect of Arab-Israeli problems within the UN setting. It turned out to be first-class preparation for what came later.I also traveled a lot to visit our missions to other UN organizations besides the Security Council and the Assembly. I went to Paris, Vienna, Geneva, Rome. We were involved in great struggles in both UNESCO and the ILO over the over-politicalization by Third World countries of these bodies. The biggest challenge was whether we were going to withdraw from UNESCO, unable to get the kinds of changes in its preoccupation with Israeli-bashing and setting up so-called “international information orders” which were quite antithetical to the organization's charter and original mission.

Q: Was it your position at the time to try and stay in UNESCO and bail them out?

LEWIS: We in I.O., and I myself, were not in favor of pulling out at that stage. We were still trying to work with UNESCO and get it to back away from some of the practices that were really infuriating us, as well as certain people in the Congress and in the administration. I had several meetings with M'Bow, who was even then the Director General of UNESCO, a very prickly and difficult man. You could see the handwriting on the wall. The pressures were rising to withdraw. We were still hoping we might get across to M'Bow and his colleagues how important it was to make some changes in UNESCO procedures. We really didn't think the U.S. ought to withdraw from an organization of which we were the founding father. But it was coming, and I don't think any of us were confident that we ought to stay a lot longer if the trends continued the way they were going.

We also had a struggle over ILO, and there was also a lot of pressure to withdraw from the International Labor Organization.

Q: That was from Congress, wasn't it?

LEWIS: From Congress, as well as from the AFL-CIO. I worked very closely with John Dunlap, who was Secretary of Labor part of that period, and with Lane Kirkland and his colleagues and George Meany, trying to figure out how to get ILO to shape up and reform itself so that we wouldn't also be faced with this question of withdrawal. In that case, ultimately things did improve later on.

Q: David Morse had gone.

LEWIS: Yes. I did a lot of speech-making around the United States, trying to explain what the UN was all about and why it shouldn't be judged just on the basis of the Zionism-racism resolution. I was trying to get more public understanding of the many technical areas where the WHO and the FAO and the World Aviation Organization, Intellectual Property Organization, all of the family of UN agencies, played really important non-political roles in coordinating the world's business, and we really shouldn't just pick up our

bags and leave. There was a rising anti-UN tide, and Moynihan helped to stimulate it by his fiery speeches about all the frailties of the UN. Yet on balance, Moynihan was certainly not against the UN.

Q: But it sounded like he was.

LEWIS: Yes, the way he criticized it fed the extreme UN opponents. Then later on, Jeane Kirkpatrick took up the same themes even more strongly in the Reagan Administration, and that led ultimately to our getting so far in arrears in our dues, the UN almost going broke, and a rising anti-UN feeling in Congress, which is going to be with us, I think, for a long time to come. The seeds were really all planted in that Moynihan era.

One thing we started, which I think was worth doing, was trying to make some greater connection between the way people voted in the UN and the way in which we dealt with them diplomatically elsewhere. In other words, to make nations' UN representatives' actions in New York more important in the total range of our bilateral relationship.
So we began more frequently going out with instructions to capitals, trying to get our ambassadors to impress on the government that we were watching the way their representatives voted. The message we began sending was: whether they knew what their UN ambassador was doing in New York way back in Accra or not, we knew what they were doing, and it might have some effect on our relationship in some other area. That process started in my era, and it was probably something we should have started sooner. It was carried to perhaps an excessive extent in later years.

I was enjoying the job and had learned a lot about the UN system, a lot about multilateral diplomacy, which is very different from just the straight bilateral stuff. We tried to encourage better officers in the personnel system to come and take jobs in our multilateral missions, tried to get more training for multilateral diplomacy given to our officers, and we were beginning, I think, to get quite a good esprit de corps again in the IO bureau.

Joe Sisco had been assistant secretary some years before. He'd really made IO into a hot-shot bureau with a lot of the best people; gave a tremendous leadership elan. IO had subsequently fallen on somewhat quieter—I won't say evil days, but less satisfactory days. It was hard to get good officers ambitious about their careers to come into the bureau, because they didn't see the promotion results coming from that kind of service. But this was one of the things that I was working on and was very interested in. Then, of course, Ford lost the election in 1976 to Carter.

I was a bit naive, because I thought I was doing a good job, and we had some good programs going. I hadn't been in the job very long. I sort of naively thought that as a non-political career officer maybe I could stay on as assistant secretary in the Carter Administration, and I really wanted to.

As you know, Peter, transition teams for the newly elected President descend on the State Department after an election. We had one. The part of the State Department transition team that dealt with our bureau dealt with several others as well, headed by William Maynes. Bill Maynes, now editor of Foreign Policy magazine, a former Foreign Service officer. I think he was with the Carnegie Foundation at the time, out of government. We and other bureaus prepared voluminous briefing books for the new Secretary Vance and his associates, none of which, I think, were seriously looked at, as is unfortunately true in every transition. A huge amount of work goes into writing those papers for the new team, but they, of course, don't trust the outgoing team and want to see their own people's assessments of all the issues. Bill Maynes and a group of his colleagues spent several days burrowing into all the nooks and crannies of our bureau, as well as other bureaus, talked to me and all my staff at great length. At the end of this process, they made their report, their assessment about our bureau, along with the other bureaus, to incoming Secretary Vance, basically how they assessed the way the bureau was operating, how the policies looked, what personnel changes ought to be made, and so forth. In our last chat, when he finished the job, Bill said, “You know, I really wanted very much this job.

This is the job I'd like to have in the administration. This is the one I wanted. But I had to be intellectually honest, and I reported to Secretary Vance that you're doing a very good job and that you should stay here. I'm cutting off my nose to spite my face."

I never saw his report. I assumed that's what he did report. In any case, that isn't what happened. Why it didn't happen is quite interesting. Andy Young, a close friend of Jimmy Carter's, came to New York to be Carter's UN representative. Andy was certainly a nice enough person. In our initial conversations, he couldn't have been more polite, but he had a real ideological abhorrence of the Nixon Administration, of Vietnam, of a lot of things which had gone on during Republican years. Apparently, what he did was to pass the word to Secretary Vance and to the White House personnel people that he didn't want anybody in the New York mission or in the IO bureau in Washington who had ever held any senior position in the Nixon Administration or the Ford Administration. Whether they were career or non-career didn't make any difference. He alleged that this had nothing to do with distrust of them, he just needed to have a clean slate and get rid of all these indications of the old order and nasty old Machiavellian world, Kissingerian style of diplomacy, Nixon's machinations, and the rest.

Vance, I'm told, did try to convince Andy that he should not object to my staying on in IO based on Maynes' report to him, and I gather that's also what other people said to Vance about me. Phil Habib was Under Secretary for Political Affairs, the key career officer advisor to Vance, someone Vance had great confidence in from experience in the Johnson Administration. He was also a man I had looked up to a lot in my career, who thought well of my work. Apparently, Phil also urged Vance to keep me, but didn't succeed. Vance was wise enough to realize that Andy Young really had the inside track as far as Carter was concerned. Vance was a new player to Carter, and there was no point, really, to fight over this question of who's going to staff this UN operation. That's Andy's bailiwick, Carter wants him to have it, and Vance had lots of other problems.

Q: Actually, that posture of Andy Young's is exactly what Nixon did when he came in and told Kissinger, "I don't want anybody from the past on the NSC except Hal Saunders."

LEWIS: That's right. Exactly.

Q: "Sweep them all away."

LEWIS: Of course, that's what happened when Reagan came in, also. It's not unusual at all. Really, as I say, it was quite naive of me even to think that an Assistant Secretary for IO would stay on, career or not. I really wasn't as politically savvy in those days as I guess I am now.

In any case, I got the word that it wasn't going to happen. I didn't know what was going to happen to me. I was pretty well tired out, and I was disappointed and a little bit semi-bitter at what I understood to be Young's attitude, especially since I had personally voted for Jimmy Carter, though I was an Independent, and am still an Independent, and regarded myself as very supportive of the new administration. But that, of course, didn't make any difference.

Sallie and I decided when I left the office to go to Mexico for a few days' vacation. I didn't know what was going to happen when I got back, but I just thought I'd wait and see, let the chips fall where they may. While I was down in Yucatan, we were visiting one of the Mayan cities, I got a phone call from—I've forgotten who now, it wasn't Phil Habib. I can't remember who called me. Anyway, this person told me that Secretary Vance felt badly about not being able to keep me in IO, and that they wanted to send me to a challenging embassy, that there were three being considered, and what would my reaction be if I were nominated for any of these three. The three were India, South Africa, and Israel. I'd thought quite a lot about India because I'd been there with "Chet" Bowles several times and Sallie also had kind of a fascination for India after our visits from Afghanistan. That was obviously very attractive. South Africa, I really didn't want to be considered for. We

both grew up in Texas in an era of segregation and Jim Crow, and we have some very strong views on that subject. I just didn't feel like getting into the emotional meat grinder of South African apartheid if I could avoid it.

I'd never even thought about going as ambassador to Israel. I'd been there once. I'd stopped off there on the way back to Afghanistan when I came back in 1974 to be interviewed by Win Lord, spent three days and visited Nick and Patty Veliotes, who was then DCM, during one of the Kissinger shuttles. I saw Tel Aviv, never even got to Jerusalem. That was my exposure. Herzliyya Pituach was my prior exposure, really, to Israel. But as I said, over the past 15 months in IO and earlier in the policy planning staff, I'd been working on Arab-Israeli issues a great deal of the time, and I'd gotten very much into the diplomatic side of the problem. Interestingly enough, I think I mentioned that in graduate school, I majored in Middle East studies, but never had been assigned there, except to Afghanistan. So I'd always had an interest in the Arab-Israeli problem, knew almost nothing about Israel as a country, and really knew less, I guess, about the history of Zionism and all of the intricacies and the background of the state. But the minute it was mentioned, a light bulb came on, and I really thought it was a tremendously exciting idea. Sallie had the same reaction.

So I said, “I'd be delighted to go to India, but I'd really much prefer Israel. It's a unique and extraordinary kind of challenge and has a political dimension that would intrigue me. I would like to avoid South Africa if possible.” And that's how it came out.

Shortly thereafter, we got back from Yucatan, and Cy Vance asked me to go to Israel.

Q: Who was there, Malcolm Toon?

LEWIS: Toon had already left. Toon had been the ambassador for only about 18 months. Toward the end of the Ford Administration, Moscow had come open. Toon, of course, was a Soviet specialist who had served all his life in Europe until this one tour in Israel, and he wasn't all that wild about Israel, in fact, nor were the Israelis wild about him either. I

suppose it was mutual. But he always wanted to be ambassador to Moscow, and though it was at the end of an administration and therefore, your chances of being appointed and staying on in a new administration were not great, Mac took the chance and accepted the post as ambassador to Moscow, and hoped that the new administration would keep him there. In fact, that had happened. He had left in December, so by the time I got there in May of '77, it had been empty for six months.

Q: Who was Charg#?

LEWIS: Tom Dunnigan was Charg#, a good, solid, low-key professional. Unofficially, it was announced in the usual newspaper stories early in March that I was going, and it took, as usual, a couple of months to get all the papers filled out and the congressional hearing, and get confirmed. So I was sworn in and ready to go in early May.

By that time, however, the Israelis were having an election, and the election was scheduled for the 17th of May of '77. The Labor Party was in a turmoil. Prime Minister Rabin had suddenly withdrawn from being the candidate for re-election because his wife's bank account had been discovered here in Washington. She had kept a small bank account when they left, after he was ambassador, and that was technically against the currency regulations. That came out in the middle of the campaign, and he took responsibility for it and withdrew from the race. [Shimon] Peres, who was then defense minister, had moved over to be the candidate for prime minister in the middle of the campaign. Labor was in great disarray anyway over a lot of other matters, scandals, corruption, tired blood, had been in office too long. Menachem Begin, who was the perennial challenger, happened to be in the hospital with a heart attack, and no one much thought that he would do any better than his previous five or six losses. But there was a good deal more ferment, and the polls showed the Likud very strong.

One of the issues in the campaign, which Labor was being berated about by the Likud, had to do with their loss of confidence of the American administration. Carter had already

had a meeting with Rabin in Washington shortly after he took office, along with a series of other meetings with Middle East leaders. It had gone very badly, so Carter had gotten off with the Israeli prime minister on a very cold and formal kind of footing. This was being used by Likud against the Labor Party in the campaign to show that they had no particular ability to deal with this new American administration who seemed determined to make peace in the Middle East all in one fell swoop. There were lots of predictions of splits and confrontations with the U.S. in the air, and the election was a quite delicate balance in the polls.

So I figured that with all the spotlight of attention that the American ambassador apparently would have on him in Israel, from what I could already tell, it would be wiser for me not to be in the country in the days just prior to the election. I might inadvertently say something which could be used in the election campaign by one party or the other and get myself burned at the very beginning for interfering. I was dead tired anyway from the crash preparations of trying to learn about Israel, meet every Jewish leader in the United States before I went out, meet with the “Presidents Conference,” the U.S. Senate, and the rest of it. So I was in need of a few days' rest.

Sallie needed to stay on here with the kids until school was out in any case, and I was going out by myself initially. I stopped in Taormina for five or six days, just reading and sleeping and brooding and thinking about the coming whirlwinds. Then I arrived in Israel on May 18, 1977, the day after the election, so as not to be accusable of having intervened.

Actually, I should go back on one point. During all my briefings in the State Department and the Agency and everywhere, though Labor was viewed as being in trouble, no one predicted that Begin could possibly win, and very little was said about Begin to me personally, because he obviously wasn't going to be prime minister. I had endless briefings about Peres and Rabin, and, in fact, I did a lot of digging around to find people who knew Peres, who could tell me about how to deal with him, Henry Kissinger being one. I asked

INR to arrange a seminar for me, an all-day seminar of academic experts on Israel and the Middle East, but particularly Israel. They got a very good group together, some Israeli scholars who were here in the States, some Americans. There were about a dozen of them. Only one of those 12 predicted flatly that Begin would win the election, and gave a very good analysis as to why.

Q: Who was that?

LEWIS: It was Amos Perlmutter from American University.

Q: Who used to be in California.

LEWIS: He's kind of a funny stormy petrel in the business, but he was so correct in his analysis of the trends of Israeli politics, and so much more correct than all these other experts, that I've had a soft spot in my heart for him ever since, and I've found him over the years to be extremely wise about the way in which Israeli political currents are running.

In any case, I was resting up in Taormina, assuming that Labor was going to win. I couldn't get any news that morning, the morning after the election. Then en route to Tel Aviv I flew to Rome and met there an old friend who lived in Rome, who was a political analyst for American Field Services staff and who had covered Israel as well as Italy for many years, Ned Baine, who died about two years ago. Ned met me at the airport between planes, and brought me the election results from the radio. Lo and behold, Begin had won a crashing victory. So we sat in the airport a little while, trying to figure out what that meant. Then I got on the plane and flew off to Israel, and arrived in the afternoon after the election.

Q: Did the Israelis not know much about you? Had they hoped that X, Y, or Z would be ambassador?

LEWIS: What I understood later was that, as had been the practice most times our ambassadors to Israel changed, a very delicate probe had been launched by the Carter

team to find out how the Israelis would react to certain kinds of ambassadors, quite unofficial, and through someone in Congress who was close to the Israelis as well as to the administration. In this case, I think it was done through Abe Ribicoff, who was then in the Senate. The question posed was, “Would you, all things being equal, rather see a career officer or someone from outside the career as ambassador?” There were a number of non-career candidates. Marvin Kalb, the TV personality, was one. There were a number of others who wanted the job, and I guess that's been true most times, though we'd had career officers continuously ever since 1961, except for the brief period of Ken Keating's ambassadorship, which was only about 18 months. He died in office.

Q: MacDonald and Ogden Reid.

LEWIS: In the early days, yes. But since 1961, you had Wally Barbour for 12 years, Keating for 18 months, and then Mac Toon for 18 months. Anyway, the word that had come back was that the Israelis would rather see a career officer. In later years, I've understood why, and I've verified that that is generally their view whenever they're asked. I think it's pretty smart. They believe that they have lots of political channels to the administration and the Congress, and that the State Department has always been the big problem for Israel; the so-called “Arabists” in the State Department have been their problem. So that if they have a career officer in Israel to deal with who is respected and has some credibility within the career system, and if they succeed in making their arguments to him with some effectiveness, that will add to their influence, rather than add nothing, which is the way they view the potential influence of a political appointee as ambassador. I think that that advice may have had something to do with my selection. I don't know.

Q: They would not have been very sympathetic to having an American Jew such as Marvin Kalb, regardless of whatever his name was, representing the United States, and the Department wouldn't have been so terribly comfortable, would they?

LEWIS: I have a feeling that the Israelis also think it's wiser for a non-Jew to be there. I think, frankly, it is better for everybody concerned that our ambassador not be Jewish. I'm sure there's some Jewish ambassadors who could do the job very well and would handle the pressures very well, but the Israelis are past masters at putting all sorts of psychological pressures on foreigners who they're trying to influence. It's hard enough to remain objective and not to be overly influenced by “localitis,” let's say, if you're non-Jewish. I think if you're Jewish, it just adds one more dimension of potential conflict, emotional conflict.

We had some very good Jewish officers in our embassy, some of whom I deliberately recruited, and nearly all of them handled this problem very well. They leaned over backwards, really, to be objective and critical of Israeli actions when they deserved criticism. In fact, one of them, I think, leaned over too far backwards, probably because he was Jewish. He overcompensated. But the ambassador is in the toughest spot. The emotional spotlight of the public and the government is on you just continuously, and you are so much a public figure there, that I think the strain of being Jewish, especially if you were openly Jewish, practicing Jewish, Orthodox, or just “religious,” subject to all of the emotional tensions that conflicts between Washington and Jerusalem inevitably produce, argue that the U.S. shouldn't put people into that situation if you can avoid it. I'm sure some could handle it very well, but I think on the balance, it's probably wiser not to. [When editing this page in 1995, I realize that I strongly supported the sending of Martin Indyk, a practicing Jew, as Ambassador earlier this year. He is remarkably well qualified and is doing a fine job. But I had concluded he was the best person because: there was sadly no well qualified career officer available after Ambassador Djerejian abruptly and prematurely retired from the post, and the Clinton White House was ready to turn to a much less qualified Jewish politico.]

Q: For instance, if Marvin Kalb had been nominated, possibly Israel would have said, “We love him, but don't send him.”

LEWIS: No, I don't think so. The Israelis would never say, “Don't send somebody.” They're very careful about that. But if asked or when asked discreetly, that's been their answer historically. But if Kalb had been nominated, or any other Jewish ambassador, I'm sure they would have welcomed him. Probably a lot of Israelis would have been quite pleased and would have assumed that this gives us an extra friend we can work on, and they would certainly have tried to make him feel guilty whenever he said something critical about Israel. It would have been harder on him than anyone else, (him or her!).

Q: Thank you very much.

Continuation of interview: November 8, 1988

Q: Good afternoon, again, Mr. Lewis. We're going to begin our third interview and it was on the eve of your arrival in Israel.

LEWIS: Yes, now let's see. Let me cast my eye back to that era. The period leading up to my departure for Israel from Washington in the spring of 1977 coincided with the election campaign in Israel for the Knesset. As Labor Party had been in office 30 years, the general assumption was that Labor would again form the next coalition. But they'd been going through a lot of battering over the past year and Prime Minister Rabin had been involved in an unfortunate episode where he was charged with maintaining a bank account illegally in Washington after he returned from his tour here as ambassador.

Q: Was it his or Leah's?

LEWIS: Well, it turned out to be his wife's. But he took responsibility for it which was a violation of the currency controls that were in effect at that time. So in a rather dramatic move in the middle of the campaign, he had withdrawn from the prime ministership and from heading the party ticket. Shimon Peres had become the party's standard bearer. Technically, Rabin couldn't resign the prime ministership because the Israeli constitutional

law was quite peculiar. During a campaign, once a new election date has been set, the candidate remains in office as head of a caretaker government.

But until a new cabinet takes office, the old cabinet stays in office with full powers. The one thing it can't do is resign and nobody in it can resign either. So Rabin had to remain formally as Prime Minister, but he left the office and Peres became Acting Prime Minister. Certain things which Rabin still had to take responsibility for legally, but Peres was now the candidate in the middle of the campaign and Labor was laboring. Later, Prime Minister Begin, who was heading the Likud Party campaign, had had a heart attack and was in the hospital for most of the campaign.

So it was a very curious campaign, indeed. And it was touchy enough that I realized that my arrival right at the end of the campaign, given the importance U.S.-Israeli relations play, might produce some unfortunate inadvertent accusations of intervention. I was afraid, for example, even just making an anodyne statement when I got off the plane would be interpreted one way or another as supporting one party or the other.

So I decided to postpone my arrival until the day after the election. And I stopped off and spent five days in Taormina on the way, resting from a very rigorous briefing period and waiting for the election to take place. So I got there the afternoon after the election on the 18th of May in 1977.

The morning of my flight to Israel, I had to fly up to Rome to catch the plane and I met an old friend who gave me the election returns he had just heard on BBC. Between planes I discovered I was going to be dealing with Begin, which was quite a surprise. So I spent the plane ride to Tel Aviv looking over the arrival statement I'd already prepared and figuring out if I needed to change it in light of the election returns. I concluded I really didn't, except maybe a word or two. I got there and got off the plane that afternoon and was greeted by all the assembled Israeli press corps. They were very anxious to have comments from the new American ambassador about the outcome of the election. I stuck to the arrival

statement and got away without any difficulty.But those first weeks were extraordinarily exciting and demanding to say the least. In retrospect, two things happened the first three or four days that were to me highly significant. I think it was the night after I arrived, the Canadian ambassador, who turned out to be a very good friend, Ted Lee, invited me to come to a party. He called me up the first morning I was in the embassy. He said, “Look, I've planned a party, an election celebration party, for whomever won the election and a lot of Israelis are going to be there tonight. It'd be a good time for you to meet some of the political cast of characters. Why don't you come?”

So I went, and it was an extraordinary event. The whole country was in a state of shock about Begin's victory. After all, this was the first time in Israeli history that power was going to change democratically from one major party to another. And Begin had been the perennial loser over five or six or seven national elections by that time, and was regarded as an extremist and generally a war monger, by many Israelis and by most Americans.

Q: Were there any people in the American Embassy or American friends that you had who knew Begin at all?

LEWIS: Yes, there were. I want to get to that in just a second. This party that evening was a very good insight into what I was going to be getting into because you had there most of the leading political figures from both Labor and Likud there. The Labor people like Peres, very down in the dumps. The Likud people, like Ezer Weizman, who was then in Likud and had been the campaign manager for Begin, in a state of high euphoria. And the banter and the political cross fire was a very good introduction into the unique kind of political social life that goes on in Israel, cutting across party lines, very uninhibited and pretty raucous but extraordinarily fascinating for a foreign ambassador. And I got to meet a number of cabinet ministers and future cabinet ministers on that occasion.

But the most important thing that happened in those days was that a day or two after I arrived, my public affairs officer, Stan Moss, came in to see me and said, “Mr.

Ambassador, I've got an opportunity for you and I hope you will accept." He said, "A long time ago, months ago, I'd invited Menachem Begin to lunch this coming Sunday and I'd like you to join us. It'd be a good chance for you to get to meet him informally before he gets into office."

It turned out that Stan Moss was perhaps the only one in the embassy staff who knew Begin at all well. He had seen him from time to time over the years and they got along very well. Begin, who was not a very prominent player until suddenly he became Prime Minister, was really rather ignored by the diplomatic corps in general and by the rest of the embassy by and large, though my predecessor, Mac Toon, told me later that he used to see Begin on occasion and had liked him.

I was very anxious to get this chance to meet this unknown quantity but I was a little bit wary because I hadn't yet presented my credentials. Under diplomatic practice, as you know, ambassadors are suppose to keep a very low profile and not do any business until they get formally received by the government. The credential ceremony was being scheduled for a few days hence with the President in Jerusalem.

I mulled this thing over and I finally decided to consult with Eppy Evron, who was then the deputy director general of the foreign ministry, (later Ambassador in Washington) who I had gotten to know already in Washington a little bit. I called and asked his advice, telling him frankly what my dilemma was and get his advice. He advised me strongly not to do it.

Q: Really?

LEWIS: He said he knew that given the very frayed nerves around the foreign ministry and the government, who were all very bitter about the loss and some of them tending to blame the United States for it, that I would really set Foreign Minister Allon's teeth on edge even before I met him formally and that I would get off on a very bad foot with the government. So I thought about his advice.

Q: I'm surprised that Eppy Evron would say that.

LEWIS: Well, that's what he said. I decided on the basis of that, maybe I better take his advice. I told Stan and he said, “I really wish you would think hard about this further. This is a unique kind of opportunity. This group is going to be leaving. A new group is coming. They may be angry but I think basically they wouldn't misunderstand. You ought to take the risk.”

Q: Was this just to be Begin, Moss, and Lewis or...

LEWIS: No, it was just Begin, Moss and Lewis. It was just the three of us. Sallie didn't come out until about a month later. It was just a very informal lunch around the kitchen table at Stan's house there in Herzliyya. So I thought about it a little further and I decided, “Stan is right. I really shouldn't miss this chance.” So I did it and I've never regretted it. In fact, I think it was the perhaps the most important decision I made in certainly the first year or two I was in Israel.

I went to Stan's house, and Begin showed up promptly on schedule and was very cordial, friendly, and obviously anxious to meet me. We spent about two and a half or three hours together, the three of us. And much of it was my trying to get to know him and understand him. I asked him a lot of questions about his life and his very complicated and dramatic life. In the course of that conversation, I got quite a different sense of him than I'd gotten through the rather sparse briefings and stuff I'd read about him up to that point. And I did come away with a conviction that he was determined to do two things at least. One, he was certainly a great admirer of the United States and he had every hope of being on good terms with us, and dispelling the impression that he was going to be hostile, which was the general sense in the press at the time. More importantly, that he was determined not to lead Israel into war, which is what his image would have suggested, but that he really wanted to go down in history, if he possibly could, as a peacemaker and that he thought

there was a chance to achieve peace at least with Egypt, and he was going to work hard at it.

We found outside Stan's modest little house, when we came out, a couple of dozen journalists waiting, laying in wait, to interview us. Somebody, presumably Begin, had tipped them off that he was going to be meeting with me. And, we had a light exchange.

But I went back to the embassy and sent the first first-person cable since I'd been there to try to size up my initial impressions of Begin and where he would lead us and Israel. I remember the title of the cable was rather dramatic, I guess. I entitled it, “Menachem Begin: Moses or Samson?” I went back and read it recently, and it stands up fairly well in light of history. It was certainly not clear at that point which he would prove to be, and in a sense he proved to be both in different stages in his prime ministership.

That first month or two was filled with trying to understand the way the complicated Israeli political scene works, meeting as many politicians as I could possibly encounter. There were lots of occasions, presenting my credentials to the President Katzir, calling on Foreign Minister Allon formally. He was still in office at that time, and he was still in a very grungy mood about the elections. He was blaming Jimmy Carter for not having been more cooperative on some arms sales issues to Israel during the period of the campaign and undermining Labor's traditional argument that the Labor Party knew how to work with the United States and that Begin would destroy U.S.-Israeli relations. He was really quite upset. He lectured me for about an hour on the topic of the United States and all of the mistakes that Carter had made and how dreadful the outcome of the election would be for the U.S. and Israel both.

Some months later, after he had long since cooled down, in a reflective moment he admitted to me that Labor had beaten itself. It certainly wasn't the Americans that had done them in. But he still contended that the U.S. policies during that spring, the first months of the Carter Administration had cost Labor two or three or four seats maybe. But

since they lost overwhelmingly by ten or fifteen seats, it was clear that Labor's downfall was the final act in a long, slow decline that they'd been going through ever since the end of the Yom Kippur war, corruption, the resignation of Rabin, and a general sense of tired blood that the party demonstrated by that time in dealing with Israel's problems.

Q: How do you explain the surge and enormous Sephardic Jewish support for the Ashkenazi Begin? Was it just along political lines? How did that magic occur that gave them such great support?

LEWIS: Begin's appeal for the Sephardic population is an interesting phenomenon. He was the epitome of the Ashkenazi, Polish, lower-middle class aspirant to gentility. And I've always explained it this way. Begin had been for decades almost a pariah in Israeli politics, an outsider, never part of the political establishment. He is a very proper, dignified person, polite, extremely polite and a man who, certainly after he became Prime Minister, was very careful about the symbols of Jewish concern, not that he was particularly orthodox himself, he was just mildly observant, but he never offended the religious sentiments of the Sephardic or the Ashkenazi population for that matter. The Sephardics, the Moroccans, the Tunisians, the Iraqis, and so on, while not particularly orthodox, are traditional in their view of religion. They were—and are—uncomfortable with the militant secularism and anti-religious slogans in the labor movement, and particularly the left wing of the labor movement. So Begin was very comfortable for and with them from the point of view of his Jewishness. He was also, I think someone maybe a lot of Sephardics identify with as not part of the establishment, but an outsider because their great sense of alienation has been rejection by the Ashkenazi establishment, the labor establishment. In a very paternalistic way Labor had tried to integrate them into the society, provide them with jobs and language training and the rest, but in a most paternal way and left them with the impression that the Labor Party always felt like it was too good for the Sephardics. Correct or not, that's the impression that many of them had and still have to this day.

So Begin, as an outsider, was able to identify with their sense of being outside the system. Then, I think, also, the Oriental population in Israel reflects some of the cultural attributes of the Arab cultures in which they lived for so many years, centuries, a great love for rhetoric, a great sense of symbols and emotional oratory are very effective in those cultures and Begin was a terrific orator, the best certainly in Israel at the time, and was able to touch in his speeches kinds of symbolic cords that really, really moved the masses.

So for all those reasons, they became extremely loyal to him. Likud had had a good deal of Sephardic support all along, but then it grew in the next couple of elections after Begin really hit his stride as Prime Minister to the point where they were, they were calling Begin “King of Israel” when he would appear in the squares and they really did respond to his oratorical flourishes and his great enthusiasm.

Q: From being a reticent, somewhat reclusive, man for many years, as you've said, somewhat of a pariah, when he became Prime Minister, did he expand enormously to his full talents or did he still remain a rather illusive figure?

LEWIS: Well, in public he expanded. Certainly he really loved the job of Prime Minister. I never saw anybody who was happier with a job than Begin was. All of his life he thought about it, worked for it, probably had long since given up any thought he would ever make it. And, I think, as a matter of fact, that the election returns came as a real surprise to him. And he was a bit overwhelmed initially. I remember visiting him the first time shortly after this lunch in his little apartment down in Tel Aviv where he lived for so many years with Ala, his wife, a two- or three-room apartment and down a few steps below the street, about as modest as anything could be, surrounded by all these hangers-on who suddenly were all over him and the international press and Jewish leaders from the United States descending. He handled it all with great dignity and considerable aplomb, but I think it was almost bewildering for him in the first weeks. But as he moved into the prime ministry late in June after about a month of putting his coalition together and beginning to demonstrate the sort of political skills that he had in such abundance, he did seem almost to swell.

He loved the role of Prime Minister. He was very formal in his office procedures and yet friendly at the same time. He didn't go out a great deal to the public in that period. But he loved presiding over Cabinet meetings and did it with real style. He was a parliamentarian of great skill and a great admirer of parliamentary tradition, the British Parliament in particular. He fancied himself, correctly, as quite a good debater and really enjoyed the parliamentary give and take in the Knesset. He really showed that very much in the way he controlled the flow of events in the Knesset, particularly in those early months after he was elected and was riding very high.

I got very much mixed up inadvertently that first month in the process of coalition building. The big surprise of that election, in addition to Begin's win, was that the new large center party, the Democratic Movement for Change (DMC), headed by Retired General Yigal Yadin, Israel's foremost archeologist, was really the big winner in that election. They came away with 15 seats, most of which they got at the expense of Labor. And that party had been formed as a reformist, middle-class, middle-of-the-road alternative after this era of labor's discontent and corruption and tarnished reputation. But it was a party assembled from the Shinul or “change” party which had been in existence before, headed by Professor Amnon Rubenstein, plus defectors from both Labor and Likud of different kinds with a couple of generals and some professional politicians like Shmuel Tamir from the old Free Center group of Likud. It was a heterogeneous group, none of whom had really ever thought that they would be in a position to enter a government with Menachem Begin.

Their whole idea of forming that party was to acquire enough weight and then to join in a Labor-led coalition which they assumed was going to be constructed. They hoped to be strong enough as a coalition partner to force Labor to clean up its act, if you will, carry through an election reform which was one of their major planks in their platform and a lot of other things.

Well, lo and behold, because they ended up getting most of their seats at Labor's expense, the only chance of forming a sixty-one vote majority was if they joined with Likud! Labor plus the DMC would not have been able to mount a majority. So then they began trying to rethink what they should do and whether under the circumstances they should enter into a government with a party that had very different ideas on the future of the occupied territories and a lot of other things and with whom they had very little in common.

Begin was busy negotiating with the religious parties, meanwhile, which had been traditional Labor allies in previous governments. And he very skillfully lined up support from the religious parties first, enough so that he was in a position to form a government without the DMC. Then he turned to them and offered them the chance to enter his government. They were in a real dilemma. And because a number of them were very oriented toward the United States and toward the U.S.-Israeli connection, they wanted our advice. What should they do?

I was rather surprised one afternoon. I was anxious to meet everybody, so when someone told me that a group of the leaders of the DMC would like to meet with me, I said, “Fine, come on over and have a drink or some coffee at the residence.” The seven leaders of the party all showed up in my sun porch one afternoon. What I thought was going to be a get-acquainted session to find out about their program and their plans, soon turned out to be a not-very-delicately-veiled probing from them as to whether the U.S. Government thought they should enter Begin's coalition or not. I parried that the best I could without stubbing my toe badly on the question of “improper intervention.” I evaded giving any direct advice, though I did think they could be more effective if they joined Begin after bargaining hard for commitments on key issues in their platform.

Q: Did they have one spokesman or they all spoke?

LEWIS: They all spoke (naturally) and they all disagreed with each other and they all argued about the issues with me, wanted my reactions. This was not uncommon with that

party in particular. Ultimately, they decided not to enter the government at that stage. The argument in favor of joining Begin was to moderate his believed to be very bellicose views on peace and war issues, and to make sure that he didn't lead Israel down into some apocalyptic outcome.

The argument against entering was that they wouldn't have the balance of power because their votes, although desirable, were not technically essential for Begin to form his coalition and they were shrewd enough to be wary as to how much they'd really be able to condition the Likud policies. That later argument won out initially. But Begin was very skillful. He left, I think it was, four portfolios vacant when he formed his Cabinet without them, had acting ministers, let it be understood that he would give them awhile to think it over and if they decided to join a little later on, their jobs in the Cabinet would be there.

Indeed, by the end of the summer they had debated and debated and debated and the longer they stalled, the less bargaining power they had to influence Begin's coalition policies. But eventually they did join his government. In fact, I think the fact that they joined was ultimately quite helpful to the cause of peace, at least. While they weren't essential to this coalition, they had some impressive people in their group and General Yadin did end up with a deputy prime ministership out of it, though not any great power. But he was a respected voice, especially in the early months and Begin listened to him somewhat. He and others in the Cabinet were moderating influences.

You also remember that Begin's great coup at that early period was persuading Moshe Dayan from the Labor Party, one of Labor's great heroes but who had been for the last two or three years somewhat in the wilderness as far as Labor was concerned—he was not in the previous Rabin government—persuaded Dayan to jump ship and leave the Labor Party, join his Cabinet as Foreign Minister. This was a great coup because it gave Begin enormous personal satisfaction and, indeed, a certain amount of heightened respectability vis-#-vis the Israeli public. Also, it gave his government a certain legitimacy and respectability overseas where Dayan was a very widely admired national hero. It,

of course, drove the Labor Party nuts to have Dayan jump ship on them. But Dayan's influence was large in that first Begin Cabinet, along with Yadin and Ezer Weizman, who was Defense Minister, and moved rather rapidly over the first year from a very hawkish extremist position to a real advocate of peace with Egypt. Those, together with a few other ministers, made that first Begin Cabinet a more balanced group ideologically than his later second Cabinet. Basically, in his second Cabinet after the election in 1981, those moderate voices were all gone. But that's getting ahead of the story.

During late May and early June while Begin was putting his coalition and cabinet together, I was trying to get to know personally those who were clearly going to be key players. I hosted Ezer Weizman, for example, at a private Saturday lunch on our terrace. He was then a hawk among hawks, tough, outspoken, and overbearing—but totally charming, direct, and attractive. At that lunch he told me he could promise me “95% of the full story”—whenever I needed it. As probable Defense Minister, that sounded pretty good to me. I saw him in a less attractive mode the night after Sallie and the kids arrived. We were included in a small dinner in Moshe Dayan's garden of their home—and met Rheuma Weizman (and Ezer) along with Yitzhak and Leah Rabin, Yael Dayan and her husband Dov, and a few others—Joe Sisco, visiting, was the guest of honor. Ezer was insufferable—taunting the Rabins about Labor's defeat loudly and often. Rabin took it with great dignity, Leah of course did not! We learned that some of the evening's tension came from the fact that this was the first visit by Rheuma to the Dayan house since Dayan had divorced her sister, Ruth, (Yael's mother). For Sallie and me, it was quite an introduction to the intertwined nature of Israel's political elite—Sallie later became close friends with both Ruth Dayan and Dayan's second wife, Rahel! (A real diplomatic achievement.)

I also hosted Leon Dulzin of the Liberal Party (Begin's alleged “Foreign Policy advisor”), later head of the Jewish Agency, for a Saturday swim-lunch. He became a good friend and an excellent source on Likud politics. And numerous others—like Moshe Arens (later Ambassador to Washington and Shamir's Foreign and Defense Minister.)

The big thing I was doing in that first month, in addition to trying to get familiar with the players and meet as many of them and spend as much time with them as I could and psych out this strange and weird political culture that I was suddenly immersed in, was to prepare Washington for the first Begin visit to Washington as Prime Minister. In Washington, everyone assumed that Begin was just very difficult, a total extremist, based on his history. The files in the State Department and Archives of Time magazine and others were replete with old clippings about what a horror Begin was. Remember there was a famous article, I think a week after the election, in Time magazine about the election: the headline was “Begin (Rhymes with Fagin) Wins.” This reference to Begin and Oliver Twist, Begin viewed as a good example of anti-Semitism which, indeed, I suppose in a sense it was, though the Time editors always insisted it was purely by change that they chose that heading.

Q: Instead of Shylock.

LEWIS: Instead of Shylock, yes. But Begin was so livid about this that he and his press secretary, Dan Pattir, who had been the press spokesman for Rabin and had stayed on as it turned out with Begin...

Q: The one with a hand disabled.

LEWIS: Yes. Very smooth and able guy. A bit of a snake but, nonetheless, very able. They ostracized Time for months, demanded apologies, would never give Time correspondent any interviews, they cut him out completely. And Time had to work awfully hard to get back to the starting gate of its coverage of the Begin era as a result.

In that period, I was trying to send back assessments on how the government was likely to look, and most important what Begin would be saying when he came to Washington. He was anxious to meet with Carter. Carter had been embarked on this Middle East diplomatic push to reconvene the Geneva Conference from almost the first day in his

administration. And had already gotten crossways with Rabin during Rabin's visit back in February. They had gotten on very badly. Carter was very impatient. He didn't want to wait, or couldn't see why you had to wait, until the Israeli election was over to get his diplomacy going. He didn't understand that no one in Israel was going to make any change of policies or commitments about the occupied territories in the middle of an election campaign. But eventually, after Begin was elected, Carter and his team back here were trying to prepare to deal with this extremist when he came to Washington. Their instinct was, “We're going to lay down the law to him.” This was Brzezinski's advice which Carter very much shared, I think, initially.

Q: Who was the sounding board in the Department?

LEWIS: The sounding board?

Q: I meant NSC, Brzezinski, and who at State?

LEWIS: Well, Cy Vance was Secretary at the time. Roy Atherton, I guess, was still Assistant Secretary for the Near East at that period. And Phil Habib was Under Secretary for Political Affairs. And you have Brzezinski and Bill Quandt as his chief Middle East guy in the White House staff. I guess Hal Saunders was at that point Director of Intelligence and Research at State working closely with Atherton.

I was, I'd become convinced from my dealings with Begin —I saw him quite a lot in this period. In fact, I saw him quite a lot throughout the years. We hit it off at that first lunch and I found him somebody I could admire while disagreeing with about his music, the need to keep the territories permanently under Israeli control. But I admired a lot of his personal qualities. He was very anxious to establish a good relationship with the United States and saw me as a good vehicle to do that. But beyond that, we really got on very well on a personal basis. But I'd heard enough from him directly about the prickly nature of his

character and the way in which he would flair up and resist anything that he characterized as pressure and his stubbornness at maintaining his positions when he adopted them.

I concluded early on that Begin was going to be very hard to handle for Carter, and very hard to get to go along with Carter's peace diplomacy in any case. He had a fundamentally different view of the permanent right of Israel to those territories and no intention of giving them up, though he was more flexible about the Sinai. But I sensed that Begin also had a great need to be accepted as Prime Minister of Israel and to be treated properly as Prime Minister of Israel, and that he was susceptible to some extent to flattery or to careful handling. I urged the Department and the White House to approach this meeting not with the intention of laying down the law to him, but trying to co-opt him, if you will, establish a real working relationship with him and try to persuade him over little by little to being someone we could work with in the peace diplomacy. And I said to everybody that with Begin, honey would get us a lot farther than vinegar. And I still believe to this day that was the right advice.

Q: Is this a fair question that Begin was aware of Brzezinski and Brzezinski was aware of Begin, would there be an innate hostility bridge there? Maybe they came from 400 miles apart, but . . .

LEWIS: No, I think at this period there wasn't any real personal connection. By the time of Camp David, a year and a half later, they had developed a very interesting relationship and Brzezinski was very critical of Begin: at the same time, as a fellow Pole, there was a certain cultural bond, and also Brzezinski had a respect for Begin's toughness and determination to stick up for his point of view.

I heard recently that Brzezinski had a private meeting with Begin at the time of one of Begin's visits to Washington, (it was several months later, not this first one in July, when our relations were very, very tense) prior to a scheduled meeting at the White House. Apparently Begin called Brzezinski and invited him to come for breakfast at the Blair

House. Brzezinski assumed that he wanted to talk to him about the meeting to try to kind of soften up Carter via Brzezinski before the meeting, which was a typical maneuver usually used by both sides during these visits. But in fact, what Begin had was something he wanted to give Brzezinski which was some correspondence and some other things out of an Israeli archive about Brzezinski's father. This gesture apparently made a great impact on Brzezinski in a personal sense. It was also typical of Begin, though. I'm not sure that it was so politically calculated. Probably was to some extent. But Begin had a very personal dimension to him of sympathy and understanding for human problems of people, children, families and so on. And he also responded to people who would express solidarity at moments of grief or human tragedy in his own life. I came to realize that it was very important for me to be in touch with Begin on a personal basis at moments of tragedy, national tragedy, personal tragedy. It was important in your relationship to him that he felt you understood the depth of his connection with the tragedy of Jewish history and individual events in modern times that recall that history.

For example, we had a bad terrorist bombing incident. Begin really took that personally, not just politically. Some expression from me that I understood how he felt about that, helped to strengthen our own relationship. Anyway, I think Brzezinski and Begin are an interesting story and it's not exactly a one-way story. Their famous chess matches at Camp David and the rest of it. There's a grudging respect there on both sides, though their political views certainly diverged, and as time went on Begin got pretty upset with Brzezinski on a lot of grounds, and vice versa.

That first visit to Washington in early mid-July, 1977, really set the stage then for the next several months in the relationship. Because I was getting over the phone and by cable indications that we were preparing back here for the visit in a very confrontational way, I was afraid it was going to be a real disaster. I came back to Washington twice during June, the first time shortly after I'd been there just to give a quick briefing on the situation and on my initial impressions of Begin. Then I came back prior to the visit and also to bring my family out to Israel. Then I came back, as is customary, a few days prior to the visit itself

and I worked very hard with the State Department colleagues and with the White House staff to try to convince people to reshape their preparations for this visit, to prepare for it in a different psychological context. I eventually convinced Carter and Brzezinski and Vance to handle Begin the way I thought he should be handled, though Brzezinski was always very skeptical.

Q: You were saying that Brzezinski was being very...

LEWIS: I was saying Brzezinski always thought that we should have been tougher with Begin at those first meetings. Carter decided to adopt my policy of trying to co-opt, and convince and bring along Begin. And he didn't really confront him sharply in any of those meetings about Begin's views. He tried to listen to Begin's views, and he made some mild argument, but he didn't really engage sharply. We were trying to get all of the parties to a Geneva conference at that point and Begin was being pressed by our side to tell Carter what he could accept, what were his conditions.

Begin always took the position that it was not proper to ask Israel to set out its negotiation position in advance, that when the time came when the bargaining started, when you had Arabs to talk to across the table, that was the time. But to make concessions on the Israeli position before you ever got to negotiation was unfair on our part to ask and unwise on Israel's part. He resisted that very much. So he would always answer in very formalistic terms and kind of give the outlines of the procedures that Israel thought should be followed, but never really engaging on the issue of what's the ultimate future of these territories that you can live with.

Begin, of course, had no intention ever of getting out of the West Bank or Gaza. He believed that they were not only historically important to Israel's legacy as the Jewish nation, but also the security risks were overwhelming.

Q: Who did he bring on his first visit?

LEWIS: In typical fashion, as I recall, he didn't bring Dayan, but I can't be quite sure about that. I may be wrong. Israeli prime ministers have a funny tradition of when they go to the United States or when they travel abroad they almost never travel with the foreign minister. He travels and they travel, at different times, and see the same people. I don't think Dayan was on that trip for that reason, but I'm not absolutely positive. Begin had with him a strange cast of characters. He had a couple of old former underground Irgun sidekicks who were not formally in the government, but he had made them kind of unofficial advisers. Shmuel Katz was one.

Shmuel Katz had, in fact, during the interregnum after the election but before Begin took office, had come as an emissary of Begin's to Washington and to the U.S. to scout out the landscape and let people know in the Jewish community, informally, and the government, what Begin's policies were going to be like. He had described them in such chilling form that the Katz mission had been one of the reasons why Brzezinski and others thought that they should lay the law down to Begin early on. But now Katz was there with Begin in the Cabinet Room, and at one point in one of the early meetings Carter gave the floor to Begin.

Begin responded on whatever the subject was and then he turned to Katz and said, “I'd like my friend and old comrade Dr. Katz to describe for you the way we see these territories.” Shmuel then launched into about a half-an-hour fire-and-brimstone lecture on the centrality of Judea and Samaria to the Israeli soul. Carter was furious, but listened politely, and patiently.

He also had with him Dr. Reuben Hecht, another old Irgun supporter, a very wealthy businessman from Haifa who was a sidekick of Begin's politically and had been one of the chief financiers of the Herut party for years. There were foreign ministry people, a couple, along. Simcha Dinitz was the ambassador here, a holdover from the previous Labor era. He was there. Begin had one of his personal assistants, Yehuda Avnir, now the Israeli ambassador in London, who was in Begin's office, again as a holdover from

Rabin's period. In fact there were a number of staff people, two or three of them at least, that were kept on by Begin. Rather unusual, if you stop to think about it. They served him very loyally and he did not penalize them for what would be presumed to be their Labor political affiliations.

Q: Did he have Dan Pattir along?

LEWIS: Dan Pattir was there, of course. There were others. It was a big crowd. Israelis always travel with large delegations.

One of the inevitable fights we had every time any Israeli dignitary came to Washington was the struggle over how many Israelis would be allowed into the meetings at the White House or at the State Department, and they always wanted to bring more than our side wanted to have brought and this was a rather tedious negotiation as to who would be admitted. Usually you would reach agreement on a number, and then they would show up with three or four additional at the last minute anyway. And somehow they would usually get in.

Q: I think that's enough for today. Extremely interesting. I think it's quite original and valuable.

Continuation of interview: May 15, 1989

LEWIS: We were talking about Begin's first visit to Washington in July, 1977. I have already described the setting for the visit and described some of the people who attended and the style that Carter adopted. At the end of the meeting, there was an anodyne agreed statement about pursuing the peace process. Carter and his colleagues wanted Begin to commit himself formally to formulations about UN Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338 and international conferences which Carter was busily trying to put together. But Begin eluded all of those efforts and therefore the final statement was quite general. It was amiable. Carter was unsuccessful in getting Begin to tell him either privately or

publicly what his eventual negotiating position would be. Begin kept returning, as he often did, to the formulation of “everything is open for negotiation”, but that it was not correct to negotiate until you reached the bargaining table. He wanted American assistance to get the negotiations put together, but he would not define his positions. Carter was somewhat more favorably impressed in the initial meetings with Begin than he had expected to be. He realized that he was meeting a tough negotiator. He was attracted and moved to some degree by some of Begin's history and eloquence about the age-old dilemmas of the Jewish people, which occupied a fair amount of attention during the discussions—certainly during the informal parts.

Q: Was he as persuasive in personal conversation as was as a parliamentarian?

LEWIS: He was very eloquent in personal conversation, but whether he was persuasive or not, depended a lot to whom he was talking to. He was extremely persuasive with American Jewish personalities. One of the things that occurred on the visit—which was subsequently repeated every time Begin came to Washington and he came ten or eleven times during his Prime Ministership—was that after he finished the formal meetings at the White House and State Department, he would go to Capitol Hill and hold meetings with the Senate Foreign Relations Committee and usually with the House Foreign Affairs Committee. They would invite any House or Senate members to join those sessions. Then he would meet with small groups with sympathetic Congressmen and Senators privately in the course of his stay in Washington. He would always have one large meeting at least and some smaller meetings often with the general public and the press. During his early visits, he was extremely effective with the Congress in dispelling the image that he was just a war-monger and a bomb-thrower. He convinced them that he was genuinely interested in seeking peace. He would always have a little triumph when he would meet with the assembled leaders of the Jewish community in a banquet room in one of the hotels here in Washington. He would receive standing ovations. His oratory on those occasions was very effective. As far as his persuasiveness with Vance or Brzezinski or Carter, that was mixed. He didn't give much ground in those conversations since he

would repeat almost endlessly the familiar themes he had stated on previous visits. He kept his cards very close to his chest and he did not always make particularly effective impact on the officials he was dealing with. He tended to talk quite rhetorically in private conversations, not just in public. If Carter wanted to get down to brass tacks and to a franker and more informal level, he found it very difficult because Begin was very wary of being co-opted.

After he returned to Israel, his reports to the Knesset and the Cabinet were very positive. He put a gloss on his reports which minimized differences with the United States and maximized the polite expressions of support that he heard from Carter and the more enthusiastic expressions he heard on Capitol Hill and from the Jewish community. Since a good many Israelis feared that this first encounter would turn out very badly for Israel, they were naturally relieved. The Labor Party people may have been secretly quite disappointed that Begin didn't have a big confrontation with Carter on that first trip. That set a pattern that continued throughout the whole eight years I was in Israel. Whenever Likud leaders—Begin or later Shamir or their colleagues—would come to Washington at moments of tension, there were many in the opposition who were either secretively or fairly openly hoping that a big crisis would ensue because they always believed that this would be an effective weapon in Israeli domestic politics. Any government has to be able to demonstrate to the electorate that it can get along with the United States even though at times it may have to be very confrontational. There is a political price to be paid by Prime Ministers who get into public fights with U.S. Presidents. Begin avoided that on almost all of his trips and certainly on the first one.

During the month of August, 1977 the U.S. was very actively involved in attempting to push the process towards an international conference. It is ironic how many of the things that happen that year were repeated in 1988 and early 1989, although with different participants.

Secretary Vance made another tour of the region and there was an effort made behind the scenes and very carefully kept from Israel in the formal sense—although they probably had a good deal of intelligence about it—through intermediaries to try to persuade the PLO to accept 242 and 338 and to say something about Israel's right to exist in a form which would make it easier for the PLO to be brought into an international conference. This was the scenario that was repeated in 1988 very actively. Finally, there was apparently a text which was worked on and passed to the PLO through the Saudis in this case. But there were some others involved—e.g., John Maroz, who was a scholar in New York and subsequently the President of a private non-profit organization that deals with East-West security issues. John Maroz was an important intermediator to the PLO in that year and I think subsequently on other occasions. There were others as well. The Saudis were in the month of August, 1977 convinced that they had a formula which Arafat assured them he would accept. It was a formula that was acceptable to us. When Vance got to Riyadh on this trip, he found that much to his chagrin and to the Saudis chagrin, that Arafat was not willing to accept the formula. This really set back Carter's effort to pull together all the strands necessary to convene a conference.

The month of September and early October was a period of high drama because the Soviet Union was very much interested in participating in the international conference—the Administration had concluded that it was important and necessary to include them as co-conveners as had been the case of the first Geneva Conference in 1973. Vance had negotiated very secretively with the Russians about a statement of principles upon which the conference would be convened. The statement was general enough so that all parties could accept as a basis for the conference. It had been Carter's original thought that he would be able to get Begin's and others' agreement to such a statement. It didn't happen during the Begin visit, but Vance went ahead and ultimately did achieve an agreement with the Soviets on a joint USSR-US declaration in September, 1977. Then suddenly it became known by the Israelis that this agreement had been reached. They were outraged and particularly Begin. There was a great deal of boiling up of emotions in Jerusalem. The

statement became public in Washington through a leak. It was the season when various leaders go to New York for the UN General Assembly meeting—that is when Secretaries of State spend long periods of time in New York meeting all the foreign visitors. Dayan was coming to the General Assembly to represent Israel in the general political debate. He was very concerned by the impact on Begin that the joint US-Soviet declaration made and the implications that the we and the Russians were conspiring behind Israel's back to sell them out. That is the way Begin and many Israelis interpreted our efforts. They had never been informed about our negotiations with the Russians though we were in daily contact with Israel both in Jerusalem and in Washington.

Q: Didn't you comment that they were aware of the events?

LEWIS: We now know in retrospect that they were pretty well informed about the PLO negotiations, which aborted. But as far as I know, they didn't have any warning about the US-USSR talks. Anyway, it certainly seemed to come as a shock to them. Dayan, who was highly regarded by Vance and Carter and who was viewed as a moderating influence on Begin and someone with whom we could work in a diplomatic fashion more easily than Begin (because of the latter's rhetorical and legalistic style) had some long meetings in New York with Vance and eventually got Vance to agree to something that was to become known as “the US-Israeli working paper”. This was a sort of modification of the joint US-USSR statement—it was an agreed interpretation by the US and Israel of the meaning of that statement. It was reassuring to the Israelis. Of course, this “working paper” immediately also became public.

Q: Not on purpose?

LEWIS: Not officially, anyway. But I think the leaks were certainly deliberate. Actually, I believe that when Dayan informed Begin of the agreement he had reached with Vance, Begin was quite upset with him. He felt that Dayan had not been tough enough and had not gone far enough. He wanted the US-USSR agreement canceled. But Dayan stood

by his guns and ultimately Begin acquiesced, but this episode did cause a fair amount of bad blood between them. This was the first of a number of situations that developed in the next two years in which Dayan, determined to avoid collapse of the negotiation, would on his own go work out some arrangement or some formulation which he would then insist Begin accept. Begin didn't like that; he would have preferred to keep the strings in his own hands. Yet he needed Dayan very badly and perhaps in his heart-of-hearts, he wanted the results that Dayan was trying to achieve. But these situations created an increasing distrust of Dayan's free wheeling and independence. Ultimately, this was one of the issues that led to Dayan's resignation in 1979.

The public release of that “working paper” apparently had a very negative effect on a number of other Arab states, which had been pleased with the US-USSR statement, and particularly on Sadat. There is real disagreement on Sadat's view of this period. Hermann Eilts, then Ambassador to Egypt, gives one well informed view. Some of the Israelis have a very different view based on things Sadat said to them after he came to Jerusalem and they were in direct touch. A number of the Israeli participants in these events—Dayan, Weizman, Begin—became convinced, after they finally met Sadat months later and they had discussed what had occurred during this period and what led him to make his decision, that it was the signing of the US-USSR agreement that became the most important trigger to Sadat's decision to take a new direction towards dealing directly with the Israelis. Sadat felt that having kicked the Russians out of Egypt and having put a lot of confidence in Carter, he was suddenly confronted by having the Russians back in the middle of the diplomatic equation. He did not relish that. Hermann Eilts says that he does not think this version of history is correct. He thinks that, in fact, initially the Egyptians' reaction to the joint statement was quite favorable. They thought it would set a good framework for the international conference, but it was the issue of the “working paper” two or three days later which brought Sadat up short, for he interpreted that paper to signify that Israel's weight in Washington was so strong that they would be able to turn Carter around rather readily. This left the Egyptians believing that relying on the US

and the Soviet Union to achieve Egypt's objectives was not such a wise move. In view of the demonstration of Israel's diplomatic strength in Washington, Sadat decided to deal directly with the Israelis and to get to the heart of the argument. I don't know which of these theories are right, but most experts and historians who have written about this period agree with Eilts on his view of events. But there is some evidence to support the Israeli theory. Sadat did not relish the idea of having the Russians play a central role for he knew that they were close to the Syrians and the PLO and they didn't care much for him after he had thrown them out of the country. To have them as a central player may have been disadvantageous to Egypt's interest as contrasted to the interests of other Arab states.

In any case, Carter continued during September and October, 1977 to try to put together an international conference which would be attended by all parties—we and the Soviets would preside. It is clear that the chance of achieving that had pretty well evaporated by the end of September. This was not only due to the fact that Egypt was getting quite nervous about the idea of having all the other Arab states present—enabling them to veto an agreement that Egypt might be able to reach about the Sinai—but also because the Syrians and Jordanians in particular had very different views on how the Arab side should be represented at the conference. The issue was whether there would be one large Arab delegation—this was the Syrian view and would have effectively tied Sadat's hands in negotiating his own interests—or whether there would be separate delegations in which each Arab part would speak independently and negotiate separately under the conference's umbrella. That issue was never resolved. Hussein later said many times that we were on the point of having a conference if only Sadat had not gone to Jerusalem. Hussein was trying to play the broker on the Arab side. He has said that he had the issue of the delegation almost worked out and that the conference would have proceeded, but that Sadat undermined the whole process by going to Jerusalem. I don't think that view is factually accurate. Our judgment at the time based on all the contacts we were having with all parties concerned was that the Arabs weren't getting anywhere in sorting out their side of the negotiating table. There were lots of problems with the Israelis as well. The question

of the PLO was still unresolved because Arafat had not been able to swallow a formulation which would have made him, putatively at least, a legitimate participant in the conference. In any case, by the end of October, Carter was getting very upset. He had invested many months of intense White House energy in this Middle East peace conference. A lot of his other priorities in this first year were not getting the attention they deserved; he was spread too thin diplomatically—the Panama Canal negotiations process had used up a lot of political credit in the Spring of 1977. He was watching his game plan for Middle East peace stalled completely, partly because Begin was not more forthcoming, although there was blame for all sides. It was in the middle of October that it is reported that Carter wrote a hand-written letter to Sadat, appealing to him to help break the impasse. Seemingly, what Carter meant by that was not what Sadat interpreted it to mean. Carter wanted Sadat to be more flexible on some formulation that was then at issue, but Sadat interpreted it apparently as meaning that Carter was quite weak and could not pull the conference off without a good deal of help from other quarters. He began then to think very seriously to try to go directly to the Israelis. In the meanwhile, he had some conversations in Bucharest with Nicolae Ceausescu. Begin had visited Bucharest previously. Ceausescu told Sadat that Begin was a tough, strong man and someone who once he had made his mind up, could deliver. Sadat had also been given some similar advice by the Shah of Iran, which is an interesting dimension of the equation. Most important, we now know that there had been two secret meetings between Dayan and General Tuhami in Morocco. Tuhami was one of Sadat's oldest colleagues. He had been an original member of the Revolutionary Committee with Sadat and Nasser. He is a very strange man, a mystic. He headed Egyptian intelligence for a while—a very shadowy. strange figure. But Sadat had great confidence in him. With the mediation of the King of Morocco, Begin and Dayan probed to see whether they could get to Sadat without going through the international conference route. A first meeting had been arranged and then a second—both incognito—with Tuhami in Rabat under the King's aegis. In those meetings, there are a lot of informal explorations of what might happen, what the results might be if there were to be negotiations about the Sinai. There is a dispute in Israel still today as to whether, as is alleged by the Labor

Party, Dayan promised Sadat that if there were a peace or something like it, the whole Sinai would be returned. Dayan's personal records and those of an aide who was with him attest a much more elusive Israeli position, although there may have been suggestions of such possibility. I can't be sure which version is correct. I am inclined to think it was the latter. I knew Dayan well enough to know that he was extremely careful about committing himself to things that he was not certain he could deliver. He himself wasn't in favor of giving back all of the Sinai. He believed at that time that the bases at Sharm el Sheikh should be kept even if the rest were of the area was returned. I am sure that Begin would not have authorized Dayan to make any such secret commitments. So Tuhami may well have reported back to Sadat a more categorical assumption about Egypt being able to have all the Sinai returned if it bit the bullet; that doesn't mean that was what was said by Dayan. The conversation was undoubtedly elusive in nature.

But these Dayan-Tuhami meetings were held. It was clear by October both to Begin and Sadat that there was a real possibility at least that if they could negotiate directly with each other, without the Syrians interfering for their own benefit and the Americans messing around too much—without Carter may have been an unspoken assumption—that there was a reasonable chance that they might come to some agreement over the Sinai. In any case, a combination of all the factors I have mentioned led Sadat to make the decision to make the very dramatic speech that he made in early November before the Parliament. He stuck in a couple of lines that shocked his own Foreign Minister—how he would be willing even to go to Jerusalem in his search for peace. The journalists picked up on it and Walter Cronkite and Barbara Walters asked him on television whether he really meant it. He said “Of course, I really meant it”. Begin then picked up very wisely and quickly and extended a formal invitation, which he handed to me to deliver to Cairo in a very public, flamboyant, dramatic ceremony in Begin's office at the Knesset. Matters evolved from there.

Those months of August, September and October and into the first week of November, 1977 cast a terribly long shadow because first of all, they put aside the US-USSR co-direction of the process, took the focus off the international conference and on Egypt and

Israel and left Carter a little bit out in left field. All of this was going on in October while Carter and Vance and the rest of us were going through the diplomatic process of putting an international conference together. But the steam had gone out of the idea. After Begin extended a very gracious invitation to Sadat—the tone of which in light of the history of five wars and the rest was important in these circumstances—and after Sadat had flown to Damascus to try to convince Assad to go along with him and had failed in his efforts, and after Egyptian Foreign Minister Fahmy had resigned in opposition to Sadat's policy, the die was pretty well cast for a bilateral rather than the multi-lateral diplomacy that we had spent a whole year on under Carter's direction.

My own involvement was in and out of all of these events. I was in New York and took part in some of the Dayan-Vance negotiations on “the working paper”. I had returned to the U.S. with Dayan. I had not been in Washington earlier at the time the US-USSR statement was being developed and negotiated. In fact, I didn't find out about it until I returned to the US after the public “angst” had already begun to develop. Washington had not kept me fully informed about events for fear of leaks from cables or whatever. By and large, that was an unusual situation. During the rest of my tour in Israel, there were very few cases when I was not involved or consulted and given a chance to comment on even the most secret, ticklish, high level negotiations. We made very extensive use throughout those years of the secure telephone which had fortunately been installed at my insistence early in 1977. When I got to Israel and realized how active the diplomacy was going to be and how tremendous—but understandable—the fear of leaks really was in Washington. Any cable that was sent, regardless of its classification, was likely to end in The New York Times or The Washington Post if it concerned a matter of interest. So we tended to make a great deal of use of the secure telephone for informal conversations to keep Washington informed on matters that I didn't want to commit to cable and to keep me informed on the thinking that was going on in Washington before it crystallized. That way I was able often to send a message pushing in a certain direction, based on what I had learned informally

over the phone about the state of debate in the bureaucracy. That had some influence on the determination of the issue.

Q: Were the secure telephone conversations taped?

LEWIS: As far as I know, they were not and that was one very unfortunate aspect of this kind of communications. If they were taped, I don't know where they would be. We all took notes. I would take notes of important conversations and the parties at the other end—the desk officer sometimes, sometimes the Assistant Secretary, sometimes a special assistant in Vance's office, sometime it was the White House and the NSC staff—would take notes. As far as I know, there was no orderly record kept of any of the telephone conversations that took place during my eight years in Israel. I am sure the same process went on at lots of other posts. We used that secure telephone several times each day, six or seven days each week. I have always thought that future historians will be in bad shape because so much of the dialogue is not reflected in cables. The formal outcome is reflected in cables, but a lot of the background discussion and debate that led to the cable is not available. There was one period later during the Lebanon War when a systematic effort was made for a brief period. This was because we had a task force set up in the operations center throughout the Summer of 1982. Phil Habib, who was the chief American negotiator during this period was traveling back and forth between Beirut and Jerusalem, but he was spending a lot of time in Beirut and as he was trying to negotiate with the PLO to get them to leave Lebanon during that summer, he would hole up in our Embassy in Beirut—with all the shelling not too far away—he had to have a special communications kit—an easier one to use than previous (furnished by the Agency)— which required a regulated system. He pretty much always talked to the same one or two people—Charlie Hill, then Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Near East and Asia Bureau for Arab-Israeli affairs—being a key interlocutor. He was the point man for the task force. He held lengthy-one, two and three hour—conversations with Habib. Those conversations were taped and formal records

were kept. But that was the only period that I know of that any formal record keeping was maintained.

Q: Before the emphasis on the secure telephone, did the Department use multiple addressees for the highest classified cable traffic? Could you send a message "For Vance Only"?

LEWIS: The Department did have multi addressed traffic and did distribute incoming material within the Department. You were never quite sure where the messages went. The highest restrictions—NODIS cables designated by super sensitive marking— could only be sent to the Department from the field post. The Department could send messages to several posts at the same time. It was up to the Executive Secretariat or the Department's hierarchy to repeat field messages to other key posts if it wished. During much of the peace diplomacy and the Lebanon War there was a fairly standard short re-distribution list. Anything I would send, for example, on Israel-Egyptian negotiations would automatically be sent by the Department to Cairo. There was also a period when we were given authorization to repeat directly to certain key posts on certain key subjects, peace process messages that we were sending to Washington. There were a great number of messages exchanged around the region that were designated below the NODIS level.

Q: Do you support the logic of that kind of information management?

LEWIS: I think it is very important. There were times when it would raise some anger in one post when it read what another post was reporting and commenting. We had some rather testy exchanges between John Dean, who was at the time in Beirut, and me in Tel Aviv. I was pretty unhappy about some of the things he was saying to the Lebanese and perhaps vice versa. But by and large, I think the system is indispensable. We had a pretty good team of professionals in place in all of the interested Embassies and knowing a great deal of which we were all sending made it possible for one to make a more useful contribution to the policy development process. There were many times through the years

when one post would send in a thoughtful think piece about what to do next and two or three other posts would send their reactions to the proposal and then there would more exchanges back and forth. The end result was almost always as good as meeting face-to-face at a conference. We were all frustrated at not being able to meet very often. We had several places that were centrally involved in a lot of these issues. Certainly Cairo and Tel Aviv were involved in almost everything that had to do with the Arab-Israeli conflict. Often Damascus was involved and frequently Beirut. Saudi Arabia a great deal of the time. Those were the key posts for Arab-Israeli diplomacy. We never had any meetings or got together face-to-face, because through that period of 1977-83, there were so many crises in the region, diplomatic and military, that the Department was always very reluctant to have its Ambassadors away from their posts for any length of time and certainly not four or five or six of them at the same time. The practice of having Chiefs of Missions meeting even in the region much less back in Washington—which was standard in other regional bureaus—lapsed. We had at most one regular COM meeting during my eight years. That was in Washington during the Presidential transition period at the end of the Carter Administration. By that time we were in an interregnum and the meeting wasn't terribly useful since we couldn't tell what would come from the next Administration. But we did manage once or twice to get together quickly in Cairo in connection with visits to the area by Vance or later by Shultz. Cairo was the easiest place for all of us to meet. I couldn't get to some of the Arab countries easily. Our Ambassadors there felt they couldn't come to Israel easily. So Cairo was the best place. We met once in Cyprus. The exchange of messages had become such a custom that it helped to some extent to alleviate the absence of face-to-face meetings.

We never did manage something that I think would have been useful. Perhaps the technology would now permit it more easily. We would have been greatly helped if we could have had secure telephone conferences between several posts and Washington. But we didn't have that capability. The use of the secure phone in those days were pretty frustrating. It would go out a lot; often you couldn't use it when you wanted to.

Q: Tell us a little bit of the participation of King Hassan of Morocco in the meetings between Dayan and Tuhami. Did he make other efforts?

LEWIS: This was basically his only involvement at least for a long time. Later on, a couple of years ago, when Peres was still Prime Minister, the King invited Peres for a formal visit. Under that cover, he may have arranged to have Peres meet other leaders. But the Dayan-Tuhami meetings were pretty much one shot affairs. It is possible that the Moroccans were more involved than I am aware of. The King was always very anxious to try to promote some kind of peace process. He had, for reasons that are somewhat murky, a very good view of the Israeli Labor Party and its leaders. He had prided himself on being the protector of the Jewish population in Morocco. He had high level Jewish advisors in his court who were in close touch and frequently came to Israel. There was a lot of back-and-forth. Also there was a large Moroccan population in Israel. But I don't think Hassan was really central except for that one negotiation when he provided a location for the Dayan-Tuhami meetings.

Q: Did General Tuhami participate in later negotiations?

LEWIS: He was at the Camp David meeting. That is how I got to know him. I found him to be a very extraordinary man. Indeed, rather weird.

The Sadat visit to Jerusalem in mid-November, 1977 was truly an extraordinary event for me and for everybody else who was even remotely involved. I suppose that it was also for all people around the world who watched through television. All of the drama began to build up with the invitations being exchanged. Begin, usually very technically astute, could never quite figure out how I was arranging to get his invitation to Sadat delivered. In fact, of course, it was cabled and then we sent the original in a special pouch. Begin thought it was very mysterious that somehow I was getting this document to Cairo and to Sadat for him. He was very appreciative. He made a big thing out of the fact that he was using the Americans as the intermediaries because he wanted very much to have us sign on to

the bilateral negotiating track. This was a different approach of course than the one that Carter had been pursuing. When it became apparent from Hermann Eilts' conversations with Sadat that he was serious, the Israelis assumed that the planning for the visit would take a few weeks at least, in light of the high drama and its unique character. The visit had to be planned carefully. When I delivered on a Tuesday a message to Begin from Sadat, relayed through Eilts, that he planned to come Saturday night, it created an enormous crisis. The security dimension alone was daunting. It was clear by then that the Syrians were very much opposed to it as were many Palestinian groups. The Israelis were very fearful that someone would try to kill Sadat while he was in Jerusalem; that would have been an enormous tragedy for all concerned. The Israelis wanted to organize the security carefully and to prepare a proper reception. They wanted to do it up brown. But Begin realized, and this is to his credit, that was not something you negotiated about. If Sadat was prepared to come quickly, the Israelis would just have to be ready quickly so that he could not change his mind. They quickly put together a variety of task forces and working groups. All communications were going through our Embassies in Tel Aviv and Cairo. We had a secure phone with Cairo, which didn't work too well. We sometimes communicated through the regular telephone, but not often. In any case, the amount of expense the US government incurred just for communications purposes in support of the Sadat-Begin exchanges must have run into the hundreds of thousands of dollars. Practically, all of our communication traffic was devoted to this meeting for a certain period.

The Israelis and Egyptians agreed that they wanted to get their protocol chiefs together as quickly as possible. A delegation flew from Egypt in an Egyptian Air Force craft and all had to make sure that the necessary precautions were taken to avoid shooting the plane down. The coordination of these precautions was done by our Air Force Attach# with the Israeli Defense Ministry and our Defense Attach# working through US Defense communication channels between Cairo and Tel Aviv to insure that the visit would go smoothly from a military point of view. The Egyptian team came; the head of the Israeli team was Eli Ben Elizar, then chef du cabinet for Begin. He is now in the

Knesset as a leading Likud politician. I think he headed up the Israeli liaison team. The protocol people were involved, the security people were involved, some diplomatic people were involved as well. The Egyptian group stayed a couple of days—or a day and a night—and then returned to Egypt and then back to Israel. They began to hammer out the program, the security arrangements and the rest. I was not much involved in this because this was really a bilateral show. Our role was essentially limited to providing communications. At the very beginning, when Begin and Sadat asked Eilts and me to deliver messages, we consulted with Washington and recommended that we assist in every way possible. We were authorized to do so. After that, we basically served as postmen and facilitators. I remember the press asking me about my role in one of those impromptu press conferences that was held whenever I came out of the Prime Minister's office. They all would gather around and asked questions about what was discussed, whether the visit will take place, is it real. The line that I adopted was that I was just a “happy postman” in this affair. That gave rise to me being given the title of “Happy Postman” which was used for quite a while thereafter.

In any event, Sadat and Begin managed to get together. Israelis are frequently not very good about day-to-day administration and bureaucracy—they can erect some of the worst bureaucratic obstacles in the world in getting things done routinely—but they are probably the best people in the world in dealing with crises. When there is a crisis, they really turn to and that is what happened in this case. They regarded the visit as a crisis and the preparations were really extraordinary—smoothly done in three days before Sadat's arrival.

The Sadat arrival at the Lod airport in Jerusalem on that November evening was certainly one of the two or three high points of my life, in terms of emotions in any case. The entire diplomatic corps was invited to the airport. It was a state visit. The red carpet was strung out on the tarmac in a T-shape out to where the plane would taxi. Not only was the whole diplomatic corps there, but also about two hundred of Israel's leaders, past and present, from politics, military, journalism and religion. The Druze and Bedouin communities were

represented. There was a stand built right behind us for the press—there were about 4000 journalists there, I believe, from all over the world packed into this grandstand. The arrival was scheduled for the end of the Sabbath on Saturday. Initially Sadat wanted to arrive Saturday morning, but was prevailed upon to do so at the end of Shabbat. So it was about seven or seven-thirty, just as it was getting dark. We were all lined up with the diplomatic corps in front and then two red carpets lined behind them on which stood all the previous Prime Ministers and Foreign Ministers, the current Cabinet and everyone who was or had been anybody. It was dark and no one was quite sure that it was going to happen. Still, it was like a dream that Sadat would come to Jerusalem. At the appointed hour, under a dark, black sky, all of sudden this great white plane appears. It was all white and was immediately picked up by ground search-lights. The plane circled, landed and taxied up to the end of the red carpet. It was a military plane with Republic of Egypt written on its side. The stairs were rolled up and the carpet rolled out. The Chief of Protocol went up the steps, went inside for a minute. President Katzir and Begin were standing at the bottom of the steps. The Chief of Protocol opened the door and Sadat stepped out on top of the steps. He stood there at attention with the spotlight on him, wearing a gleaming white uniform while the Egyptian and Israeli national anthems were played. All around us and behind us, among the Israeli dignitaries, you could hear some very uncharacteristic sounds of people weeping. It was just an incredibly emotional moment. Sadat came down the steps, greeted Katzir and Begin. He was then escorted down the three or four lines of red carpets and introduced to all waiting by the Chief of Protocol. First, came the Cabinet, then the Diplomatic Corps and then all the other dignitaries. Begin trailed along because Katzir, as Chief of State, was the formal host. The story has oft been told that when Sadat came to several of the people in line, he would banter with them and exchange comments. These were people he knew of—for example, Golda Meir. He told her that the Egyptians called her “The Old Lady” or something like that and that he was delighted to meet her. When he got to Arik Sharon he said something like “You know, Arik, I thought that we were going to catch you the last time”. This was a reference to the 1973 War when General

Sharon led the Israeli forces across the Suez Canal to the West Bank where he stayed for an extended period. Arik replied along the lines that he would never be caught.

Sadat had some exchange with Moshe Dayan whom he knew well by reputation, but had never met.

Q: Mrs. Sadat was not along?

LEWIS: I don't remember, but I don't think she was. The chief players in this drama got into their cars and headed to Jerusalem. I went back to the Residence in Tel Aviv. There was one interesting thing about the car used by Sadat. During the hectic three days prior to the visit, I had received a call from the Chief of Protocol who said that although he was very embarrassed to ask, he confessed that the Israelis did not have any armored limousines. He said he knew that our limousine was armored and asked whether the Israelis could borrow it. I agreed; it was a good cause. So my rather elderly, but armored black Cadillac limousine was loaned to the Foreign Ministry. The license plate was temporarily changed; they took out temporarily our radio equipment and put in their own. For the whole period of the visit, that was Sadat's vehicle with the flags of Egypt and Israel flying up front. The car was already elderly and I kept it for another two years long beyond its normal replacement cycle. In the meantime, Carter had become so economically minded—he would not let American Ambassadors or any other government official travel first class any longer (had to travel steerage)—that the Administration forbade the purchase of any limousines for any officials in Washington or overseas. So the Cadillac was replaced by a small armored Cadillac sedan with a powerful engine, but it was barely large enough for four people. It did not have jump seats as the old “big boat” had. That was a very convenient car particularly in Israel where you met American dignitaries at the airport and then drove them to Jerusalem for forty-five minutes. You could have conversations in a big car with three or four people in the back which you couldn't do in a regular car. I hated to give up the old Cadillac, even though it was aged and ready to be replaced, particularly because of its history. It really had been an important part of modern

history during the Sadat visit. Ultimately, the car was retired and was to be sold on the market as had been State's practice for years. I bought that car for a few hundred dollars—it had about two hundred thousand miles on it, at least. I used it for times when we needed a bigger car. I kept it at the Embassy and used it as a spare official car, but it was mine. Eventually, the transmission seized up and we had to sell it to someone else. But that car is still being driven around Israel by someone who knows the history and is very proud to say that was the car that Sadat used when he was in Israel.

The only other Sadat-visit event that I participated in personally was his speech to the Knesset. Everything else was bilateral and we had no role in it. I just watched as did the Israelis all the events on television. The television carried the visit night and day. We had massive newspaper reports and various politicians who were involved in the discussions would let me know in part at least how things were going. But I didn't have any official contact with Sadat or his party. We were among the guests for the formal session at the Knesset where Sadat, Begin and Shimon Peres, the leader of the opposition, all made their now-quite-famous speeches. Each spoke in his own language. For one of the rare times in the Knesset they managed to put together simultaneous interpretation for the Diplomatic Corps and the press. Sadat spoke in Arabic and Begin and Peres spoke in Hebrew. Sadat gave a very carefully prepared, quite strong nationalist pro-Palestinian speech. But the tone was very well done because it took into account Israeli sensitivities. It was a brilliantly written speech which protected his flank in the Arab world and at the same time, held out a hand to the Israelis in a very effective manner. Begin gave one of his poorer speeches. Begin was a wonderful extemporaneous speaker. He hated to read speeches. In the years that I knew him, I saw him read speeches only three times and they were all dull. This time, he didn't read but he had carefully prepared it and he chose to spend a lot of it on the tragic history of the Jewish people—a theme which he liked to discuss often. The tone was not well received by the Israelis who thought it was very ungracious and didn't live up at all to Sadat's speech. Peres gave the third speech, which was a very open, gracious, warm and attractive speech which hit a lot of the right

notes. Unfortunately, he was not the key actor, but his speech was very good. There was something else quite dramatic about the Knesset session. Ezer Weizman, Minister of Defense and Begin's campaign manager, who was a real hawk and an extraordinary fellow, just before the visit had to quell a very unfortunate incident in the Army. When it became known in the Army that Sadat was coming, General Motta Gur, then Chief of Staff, was very suspicious and thought it was all a trick—something like the Yom Kippur war surprise. It was reasonable that he should be on guard, but he made the mistake of saying so publicly, warning the government publicly that this might all be a trick. That was seen by Begin—correctly, I think—as a very bad diplomatic insult. Weizman was furious and was ready to fire Gur as result of this incident, but while he was driving to Jerusalem to report to Begin on his intentions towards Gur, his driver hit or was hit by another car resulting in a very serious accident. This was just two or three days just before Sadat's arrival. Weizman was really banged up; he was on crutches; he was in a cast. Yet he was determined not to miss the visit. Somehow he got out of the hospital. I don't think he was at the airport for the arrival, but he managed to get out of the hospital and back in the game sufficiently by filling himself with pain killers to be at the hotel when the Sadat party got to Jerusalem. He met Sadat there and had some opportunity to talk to him informally, as did Dayan and others. At the Knesset session later, Ezer pulled himself on his crutches, staggered into the Knesset, got into his seat—he was in real pain-but it was a very dramatic tribute to Sadat that he was trying to make. It was greatly appreciated by Sadat and his people.

The visit ended, the Egyptians went home and everybody spent days discussing what had happened. I got several read-outs from Begin, Dayan and Weizman on their conversations. In the meantime, Hermann Eilts was getting his read-outs in Cairo. We were cabling all this material in and little by little we were able to piece together what had happened. What had happened actually was that Sadat was disappointed in Begin's responses. He thought that his decision to come to Jerusalem was such an enormous gesture that he should have been met by greater expressions of flexibility on Begin's part.

Still, they had agreed to begin the bilateral negotiating process. And that is what happened from mid-November, 1977 to January, 1978.

Meanwhile, back in Washington, Carter and his colleagues were quite put out by being left out of the whole procedure. They put a pretty good face on it; the press treatment in Washington and the Congressional reaction was so favorable that they were smart enough to realize that they couldn't be seen as opposing the meeting, but they were concerned on two grounds: one, they really felt that a bilateral deal was a mistake and would undermine the possibility of getting a comprehensive settlement, including the Palestinian issue which is what Carter had been shooting for. Second, they were very upset with Sadat, who had worked so closely with Carter, going off on his own and not really leveling with US on what he was up to until it was too late to change course. There was quite a debate apparently within our Administration concerning how we should handle ourselves in light of all these events. There were those that said we should really oppose the meeting because the total strategy had been developed by us and it would ruin any chances of reaching anything beyond the most minimal bilateral deals. But good sense prevailed and ultimately within about four or five days, which were needed so that they could write memoranda to each other and have meetings and sort of simmer down, Carter used good judgment in realizing that this wasn't what he had designed, it wasn't his plan, but it was an enormous step which he had to support and try to broaden it. We had to see it not as the end of the story. So in this period we were very much in the background with the Israelis and Egyptians perusing their dialogue directly. They set up a direct telephone line with links between Weizman and Gamasy's offices in their respective Ministries of Defense. We were still passing a lot of messages between Jerusalem and Cairo, but now they also had a way to communicate directly. Whenever we talked to the two parties, we would remind them continuously of the need to pursue their diplomacy so that it would not dash all the hopes of the Palestinians and the Jordanians for a broader settlement. That didn't make much of an impression.

The next we knew is that they had scheduled the next round of meetings between Begin and Sadat to take place in Isma'iliya on Christmas Day.

Continuation of interview: July 11, 1989

Q: I would like to move the period between Sadat's visit to Jerusalem and the Camp David talks. What are your recollections of this period?

LEWIS: The decision by Sadat to go to Jerusalem was a bombshell not only to the Israelis, but also to the Americans. We had no warning that Sadat intended to make this grand gesture. As the scenario began to unfold a week the before his visit, I was transmitting messages along with Ambassador Eilts in Cairo, while Walter Cronkite and Barbara Walters were performing a kind of public version of what the messages between the field and Washington were doing privately. President Carter's colleagues were trying to figure out how not to discourage what was obviously a very important break-through, but to keep particularly Sadat focused on the problem of a comprehensive peace, not just bilateral peace. The US government was criticized rather harshly by the Israelis and by some friends of Israel in the United States for some hesitation about giving full-hearted support to this new development. That was a bit unfair, since the Sadat initiative was so contrary to the game plan that had been developed that would eventually lead to another Geneva conference. Inevitably, under these circumstances, it took four or five days of thrashing around in Washington before the conclusion was that, although this is not what Carter had in mind, it was a step that should be encouraged wholeheartedly and should be facilitated. Eventually, that is what the US government did.

Right after Sadat left to return to Cairo, the first order of business was to find out what had happened during the talks, to which we of course were not a party. Ambassador Eilts got a read-out; I saw Begin and Dayan and got reasonably full reports. It was clear that during the Sadat-Israeli talks, the Israelis particularly were not seeking more active US mediation, but greater encouragement for the bilateral Egyptian-Israeli negotiations. This

was something which they had been seeking for many years and had finally achieved without any intermediaries. The period of late November and early December, 1977 was unique because it was the period during which briefly at least Israelis and Egyptians were attempting to deal directly with each other and to solve the problem without any active intervention. Unfortunately, it didn't come to a successful conclusion and by the middle of January, it had become clear that there was still too much suspicion and too many differences in the approaches that Sadat and Begin were taking to prevent them from reaching a bilateral understanding without the US.

Q: Did they realize that?

LEWIS: Sadat realized it and turned again to us in January, 1978 in order essentially to get Carter on his side. So we reentered as major players and continued to be in that role for the next year. The first thing that happened in December was that Sadat had agreed, evidently either in Jerusalem or in subsequent contacts, to a Begin suggestion to organize a bilateral peace conference which would draft a treaty. But Sadat was very anxious not to be seen by the other Arab states as a seeker of a separate peace. The two agreed to set up what was to be called the “Cairo Conference”, which Egypt would host. The Egyptians invited all Arab protagonists, including the PLO and the United Nations, to participate along with the Israelis. The Israelis didn't like that too much, but they went along probably on the assumption that with all the anger that had arisen in the Arab world about Sadat's trip, then other Arab parties were not likely to accept the invitation. And in fact, that was the case.

Before that Conference convened in early December in Cairo under the nominal chairmanship of General Silasvuo, who was the chief of the UN Forces in the Middle East and was representing Kurt Waldheim, then the Secretary General of the UN. His chairmanship was a formality. He was a Finnish General, highly respected by both sides. However, his chairmanship gave the Conference a coloration of being an extension of the Geneva Conference which also had a UN chairman. Before the Conference actually

convened, there were considerable private, bilateral exchanges between the Egyptians and the Israelis with Sadat seeking to get from Begin commitments about total withdrawal from Sinai and the principles dealing with West Bank and Gaza that he could defend in the Arab world. Ezer Weizman made one trip to Cairo and in that period, Ezer was already being seen by Sadat, after having met him in Jerusalem, as a person with whom he could do business. So Weizman became a sort of emissary in this period. More importantly, the second secret meeting between Dayan and General Tuhami took place in Morocco. Tuhami was one of Sadat's oldest colleagues from the revolutionary officers' days. He had met secretively with Dayan earlier in the Fall in Morocco under the auspices of the King. That meeting had undoubtedly something to do with Sadat's decision to go to Jerusalem, when he heard Dayan's description of Begin's ultimate solution to the Sinai issue. I don't think Dayan made any commitments for total withdrawal; I am quite sure he didn't. Tuhami chose to pick some of what he heard as an implication that Sadat could get complete withdrawal if he would bite the bullet.

So Dayan and Tuhami met again in early December, but the meeting was apparently inconclusive with Begin's position as conveyed by Dayan not very satisfactory to Sadat, but still encouraging enough for Sadat to proceed. The Cairo Conference met about December 15. Ben Elizar, who was Begin's Chief of Staff, an old Herut loyalist, was designated to represent Israel along with General Abrasha Tamir, who represented the Defense Ministry. They spent several sessions sparring about protocol matters because Begin was by this time off on another track. He didn't want the Conference to start working on substance until he had a chance to get his autonomy plan drafted. He had developed an autonomy plan idea for the West Bank and Gaza, which later became the subject of very prolonged negotiations. He drafted the plan himself without any real staff input. He called me in one day in mid-December and said that he had completed this plan—he didn't describe it in any detail—but he saw it as a very far reaching way to deal with problems of the territories. He told me that he wanted me to advise President Carter very privately that before unveiling the plan for Sadat, he wanted to come to Washington to discuss it

with the President in the hope of eliciting his support before a meeting that he would have subsequently with Sadat. He could then present the plan with Carter's approval. This was Begin's game plan. President Carter and Secretary Vance were not very enthusiastic about the idea of a trip to Washington, but certainly couldn't reject it.

So Begin charged off to Washington. I was with him. We had meetings in the White House. He unveiled for Carter, Vance and Brzezinski and other top people, his autonomy scheme. He asked President Carter's support for it. Carter was taken favorably with some aspects of it, though he didn't see it as adequate for dealing with the problem of Palestinian self-determination. But he saw the need for staged, transitional period of autonomy. He saw enough in Begin's plan to think that it was something that Sadat should certainly consider. At Begin's suggestion, while we were in the White House, Carter telephoned Sadat and described in general terms the approach Begin was taking. He apparently told Sadat that it seemed to him to be a serious effort and something that Sadat should seriously consider. He didn't, I think, endorse it wholeheartedly, though Begin tried to depict later Carter's reaction as wholehearted support. After the meetings were over, Begin went back to Jerusalem with some over-estimation of the degree of enthusiasm that Carter had displayed toward his plan. Then Begin arranged with Sadat to have a bilateral summit meeting. This was done between the two of them because by this time, Weizman had left in Cairo one of his Air Force people with communication facilities so that messages could be passed back and forth directly without going through US channels. The meeting was set for Isma'iliya on Christmas Day. That summit meeting proved the high-water mark of bilateralism and in retrospect one can see that it was a great missed opportunity. What Sadat was seeking at that point was agreement on a broad statement of principles which would encompass the future of the territories and would give enough of a framework for him to defend to the Arab world his negotiations for a detailed treaty on the Sinai. The principles obviously had to include phrases like “legitimate rights of the Palestinians”, “self-determination” and phrases of that sort. I am convinced that Sadat was very anxious to move quickly to get agreement on that declaration of principles

and get his treaty before Arab reaction became too negative to the whole plan. Begin was characteristically very legalistic in his approach to Sadat's proposal for a general framework; Begin instead wanted Sadat to accept his rather detailed autonomy scheme for the territories. Sadat was not interested in such details because he didn't want to be in the position of making decisions for the Palestinians about the territories for which he could be easily attacked by Syria, the PLO and other Arabs. He wanted a fig-leaf; Begin wanted a blueprint. They apparently came close. I was told afterwards by Ezer Weizman and by Dayan, both of whom attended the summit, that Begin and Sadat got along fairly well as they had gotten along well in Jerusalem. Sadat drove Begin around Isma'iliya in his car himself and showed him the Canal Zone. There was apparently a draft of these principles that Begin was prepared to endorse in rather limited scope. According to the Israelis, Sadat was on the point of agreeing to this draft, but Osama al Baz and other Sadat advisers intervened and warned Sadat of going too far and sacrificing the interests of the Palestinians. In the end there was no agreement. Sadat didn't accept the autonomy scheme; Begin didn't accept the declaration of principles. All they were able to agree on eventually was a procedure which was in a way built on the Cairo Conference, which to this point was only a facade or skeleton. Begin suggested and Sadat agreed that they set up two committees: a military one based in Cairo and a political committee which would meet initially in Jerusalem. These committees would negotiate the two dimensions of the problem: the military arrangements for Sinai—disengagement and withdrawal—and the nature of the treaty to be negotiated which would govern diplomatic and political relationships between the two countries.

When Begin returned, I was at the airport to meet the Israeli delegation. Begin put a very positive face on the meeting in his arrival statement. He didn't dwell at all on the failures, but stressed the achievement of setting up these two committees. Weizman and others were generally supportive of that stance. Dayan was the only one who was visibly down-cast, very depressed. He didn't stay for the airport press conference. He got in his car and returned to Zahala. He told me privately as he was getting into his car that a tremendous

opportunity had been missed and that he was now very pessimistic. He said something like “It is now going to be up to you again”.

Q: Would you say that Hermann Eilts had a particularly insightful relationship with Sadat? More that one would expect from a normal appointee?

LEWIS: He was very much in Sadat's confidence. He had great respect for Sadat and vice versa. He had been there since the re-opening of our diplomatic mission in Egypt during the Kissinger period after the 1973 war. Eilts had been a confidential intermediary between Kissinger and Sadat during that 1974-75 period of active diplomacy. His judgments about Sadat and his advice to the government were very sound. Sadat had a lot confidence in him. In many ways, Hermann and I were in quite interesting situations because he was very close to Sadat and I was very close to Begin, Dayan and Weizman. So both of us were well positioned to be useful intermediaries in this game.

The Jerusalem Committee—the political committee—was scheduled to meet on the fifteenth of January. They evidently had agreed at Isma'iliya to invite Secretary Vance to attend. This was a reflection again that they tacitly, at least, realized they weren't going to make peace without American mediation. In Israel, there were those who were very skeptical, particularly about giving up every inch of the Sinai, which was one of Sadat's conditions from the beginning. Not only did Labor Party people assert that Israel would have to keep certain strategic positions in the Sinai—it had stimulated some settlements there such as Yammit and others down the Sinai coast—but in Begin's own party, there were substantial numbers who were nervous especially about his autonomy scheme which they did not see necessarily see the way Begin saw it. Parenthetically, one example of this was when Begin returned from Washington before going to Isma'iliya, he revealed to the Cabinet his autonomy proposal which he had not vetted with any of them before going to the U.S., with the exception of perhaps Dayan and Weizman and one or two others. There were those in the Cabinet who believed that the plan was dangerous and would open the way to an eventual Palestinian state. They persuaded Begin to make a few modifications

before he presented it to Sadat, tightening up some of the loopholes and in fact making it somewhat less attractive than the version Carter had originally seen. Sharon, who was then Minister of Agriculture and was responsible for settlement policy, was very skeptical about a number of the aspects of Begin's diplomacy.

Sharon did something in secret in the last week of December, right after Isma'iliya, which cast a long shadow over the next year. Seeing that the tide was running in the direction of the eventual evacuation of all of the Sinai, he established several “Potemkin” settlements. He put rudiments of settlements at several spots in the Sinai where there had been nothing before. He erected quickly a water tower here, a stockade there in order to stake out some positions in the Rafah area which would then in his mind be either bargaining chips or impediments to territorial surrender when the time came. He had bulldozers carve out a few roads and set up a few shacks here and there. This was all done covertly, somehow believing that it would not come to anyone's attention. But it of course, did. In fact, there were some enterprising Israeli television news coverage of these efforts, which was immediately picked up in Cairo. Sadat was absolutely furious and was convinced that this was an indication of Begin's really bad faith. Coming right after Isma'iliya, where he had not succeeded to do what seemed necessary, Sadat apparently interpreted this caper as an indication that there was no way to deal straight-forwardly with the Israeli government. This was another reason why he began to turn back to the United States. He was too far along, by this time, to back away from the peace effort and he made his grand gesture by going to Jerusalem, but he was really soured by the Sharon operation. When leaked into the Israeli press, it was first denied, then confirmed. Other members of the Cabinet attacked Sharon publicly for spoiling the peace process with his operation. He counter-attacked by asserting that all of his actions had been approved by the Cabinet and that he was not just operating on his own. In fact, I think that he did have approval from at least some key Cabinet members, including Begin, if not the whole Cabinet itself. But he took the heat. This had such an impact on Sadat that he was on the verge of calling off the conference in Jerusalem and refusing to send his Foreign Minister. We were

engaged in an active effort both in Cairo and in Jerusalem to try to keep the process on track, to smooth over the controversy. Vance was very vigorous in sending messages though us and directly by phone in an effort to keep the process on track. There was a huge controversy about the conference agenda. It became a great frustration during the second week of January, 1978. I was cabling in Israeli agenda proposals; the Egyptians were rebutting them. Vance then got very annoyed with the whole process which he saw as quite unproductive. I was instructed to make clear to the Israelis that unless they accepted a neutral agenda formulation which did not prejudge the outcome, Vance would not come. That was sufficient to make the Israelis propose a more neutral agenda which was accepted.

Vance did come. The Conference opened at the Jerusalem Hilton, not in the best of moods, but nevertheless with hope that they would get things back on track. The focus was again on a declaration of principles as the first step. We had the opening formal meeting with everybody around a big table in the hotel ballroom. There were statements that were quite different from each other. Then as always happens at conferences of this kind, the real diplomatic activity started outside the conference room. The American delegation was on one floor, the Egyptians were two floors above us and the Israelis were on another floor. For about twenty-four hours, Cy Vance was scampering up and down the service stairs between the floors, going from Dayan's room—he was the chief Israeli negotiator—to Egyptian Foreign Minister Kamal's room—this was Kamal's first venture into big time diplomacy and he was very nervous about it. After a few hours of very energetic work by Vance going back and forth and suggesting formulations, while we were drafting positions for him to use, the Conference was making a lot of progress. Then there was a formal banquet that evening. At that dinner, Begin came, although he was not in the formal negotiations, and made a speech in front of a lot of people—it was a big affair—including journalists. First, Kamal gave a speech which was careful and orthodox. Begin's speech was actually not intended to be anything but a good speech. It had the usual rhetoric about Israel's history which set the Egyptians' teeth on edge a little bit. What really blew

the gasket was a quite inadvertent statement in Begin's speech that referred to Foreign Minister Kamal as a young man—which was essentially correct since he was younger than Begin and certainly less experienced in diplomacy—but the Egyptians interpreted that remark as very condescending. Moreover, the formulation of age was one that was particularly offensive to the Egyptians—something that Begin was totally unaware of. It put a chill on the proceedings. Kamal made a rebuttal which was quite sharp. After the banquet, negotiations continued, but there was a lot of press attention on this event. There were some rather extreme headlines.

The next morning, Vance got word from the Egyptians that they were being recalled to Cairo. He worked very hard to try to persuade them not to return. Ultimately, he talked by phone in front of a group of us at lunch with Sadat and tried to persuade him not to insist, but eventually Sadat did insist and the delegation left and the Conference broke up in disarray. I remember Vance and I went to see Begin late that evening for a sort of post-mortem at his residence. Osama al Baz, Kamal and Boutros Ghali had just said goodbye to Begin before leaving. We found him in a mood very different from any that I had seen before. Begin was closer to being apologetic and quite embarrassed about what happened than I had ever seen at any other time. He realized belatedly that his speech had been a factor, although he was not ready to accept the proposition that Sadat would pull the delegation back on the basis of his speech. Incidentally, Kamal had told Vance that while he had taken offense at Begin's remarks, he had urged Sadat to let him stay. He did not think he should leave. But Sadat had felt that this was an insult and insisted that the delegation return. Later on, from memoirs and other information, it is not entirely clear that Kamal did urge that he be permitted to stay. More important, there are a lot of indications in retrospect that Sadat was so skeptical of Begin by the time the Conference opened as the result of the phony settlements in the Sinai and a couple of tough speeches that Begin had made to his Likud Party colleagues in the Knesset—that had been publicized in Cairo—that he probably had decided ahead of time that he would let the delegation go —although he had hesitated about that and only agreed after Vance's pressure—but that

he would not leave it in Tel Aviv for very long. He may well just have been looking for a pretext to bring it back. He seemed to have already concluded by that time that the only way to get around Begin's “intransigence” was to bring the full power of the United States to bear on his side.

Q: Did Kamal continue as Foreign Minister and did he go to Camp David?

LEWIS: Yes. He stayed as Foreign Minister until Camp David. He resigned at Camp David because he was very much opposed to Sadat's decision to sign the Camp David agreement as was everyone else in Sadat's entourage. Kamal said later that he felt that Sadat was signing his own death warrant and he did not want to be part of it. Sadat asked him not to say anything publicly until they returned to Cairo, but he did resign at Camp David. He was in office throughout the Spring and Summer of 1978.

Q: Was Brzezinski aloof from all this? Did he let Vance handle it alone?

LEWIS: During the phase we are discussing, Brzezinski was in Washington with Carter. This was Vance's show. Roy Atherton, who was by this time had been designated by Vance as Special Middle East Negotiator, remained in the area after the Conference broke up and Vance had returned to Washington. Roy did a lot in the next few weeks to try to help Eilts and me to keep the process on the rails. The period between the break-up of the Conference and Camp David is a blur of Secretaries of State and other officials traveling around, Begin going back and forth to Washington, Dayan moving around, Weizman going to Washington and to Cairo to try to smooth Sadat's hackles. Vance made some statements in Washington that made the Israelis very angry by reaffirming earlier Carter statements concerning the need for a Palestinian homeland. During late January and early February, there was a lot of tension between the Israelis and us because it was clearly Carter's judgment that Begin had blown the whole affair after Sadat had come to Jerusalem risking everything in the Arab world. Carter saw Begin's response as very inadequate.

After about two or three weeks of this, Sadat suggested that he meet with Carter alone to figure out the next steps. Carter invited Sadat to Camp David where they met and I learned subsequently—some of this is mentioned in Bill Quandt's book on Camp David—reached some kind of understanding on how to deal with Begin's “intransigence” and how to get him to be more flexible on issues such as the declaration of principles, the future of settlements, the nature of the territories, etc. This understanding involved, as Quandt described it, a kind of game plan under which over the next weeks, Carter would make much clearer in public than ever before where he and Begin disagreed. In effect, they were trying to mobilize pressure on Begin through American Jewish leaders, through Congress and through public opinion to become more flexible. Sadat in urging this course said that he would stand very firm on his positions while we would publicly discuss our disagreement with the Israelis. At a certain point then, we would come forth with some kind of compromise which would not go all the way to Sadat's positions, but which Begin would have been softened up to accept. That was apparently Sadat's concept with which Carter agreed essentially.

In any case, in January-February there appeared much more open statements from Washington—Carter, Vance, Brzezinski and others—almost continually, stressing Resolutions 242 and 338, the need to withdraw from all fronts, the question of Palestinian homeland and other issues which made Begin very angry because he always wanted these matters left out of the public dialogue and to the direct negotiations. Begin came to Washington in early March to meet with Carter. The atmosphere before he came was quite tense. It was made even tenser by the fact that a few days before he came—I was already in Washington with Ezer Weizman for pre-visit preparations—a very bad terrorist event occurred. A group of PLO commandos landed on the coast south of Haifa and murdered Gail Rubin, a young American woman photographer taking some nature pictures. They commandeered a bus and ordered the bus driver to go to Tel Aviv with his passengers. The bus came careening down the Haifa Highway with 10-12 commandos in it and with frightened passengers. It was finally intercepted and stopped just about three or four

miles south of Herzliyya—where our residence was—and just north of the outskirts of Tel Aviv. There was a shoot out with the Israeli Army during which all the commandos were killed and a number of the passengers were killed. There was a great deal of carnage. This event was a tremendous shock in Israel. There had been nothing similar to this in some years and it was a demonstration to a lot of Israelis of the problematical nature of negotiating peace with Egypt while the PLO was still around to act in its terrorist fashion. There was an outcry and within three or four days, while I was in Washington, the Israeli Army—even while Weizman was in Washington, but in communication with his Ministry—was directed by Begin and the Chief of Staff to move into South Lebanon to attack PLO bases in what turned out to be a very large incursion, called “Operation Litani” which was intended to clear the whole area up to the Litani River—26 kilometers north of the border—of the PLO. That caused a huge furor in the United Nations and in Washington and led ultimately to the establishment, over Israel's strong opposition, of the UN Force—UNIFIL—which is still in South Lebanon today. The resolution of the Security Council called on Israel to withdraw inside its borders and established UNIFIL to monitor their withdrawal. The Israelis did not withdraw for about three months during which we were trying on the one hand to push the peace process forward and on the other, trying to deal with this huge Lebanese complication. A lot of the people around Carter were convinced that the incursion was deliberatively timed to take attention away from Begin's intransigence on the territories. That view soured the visit preparation mood.

Begin came and we had frank, sharp but polite talks with him and his advisors at the White House. True to the game plan, Carter, as we can see in retrospect was following the game plan, was rather precise on the actions that Begin was refusing to take. At one point in the conversation, he said, “Mr. Prime Minister, if I understand correctly, your position is that you will not do this and that you will not do that, you will not do this and will not do that.” Begin, not in hostile, but in an unsympathetic mode, tried to turn it around by saying, “Mr. President, I would prefer to put our position positively. We will do this and we will do that, we will do this and this and I would hope that when you describe our position, you

will describe it as I do, not as you do." But Carter persisted. One of the things that he was arguing about is whether Begin would accept the applicability of Resolution 242 to all fronts, not only to the Sinai, but also to the West Bank and Gaza. This is something Begin had never accepted formally. He accepted 242 but only according to his interpretation which was that it did not require Israel to withdraw from all territories—that was also our interpretation—but it did not require Israel to leave anything more than the Sinai which was the overwhelming portion of the territory. At the end of the meetings with Carter, Begin asked Carter very specifically that when he would speak to Congress and the press about these meetings, that he put a positive interpretation on Begin's position, not a negative one. Carter was noncommittal though Begin later interpreted Carter's response as signifying assent. Almost as soon as we had left the White House, there was a briefing of the press and a Carter briefing of key Members of Congress in which he characterized Begin's position of being very intransigent. Begin met with Members of Congress, as he always did when he came to Washington—I was with him during those sessions—who acting in response to what they had learned from Carter about Begin's position, questioned Begin in much sharper, assertive and aggressive manner than any Israeli Prime Minister had previously encountered. So when Begin left town to return to Israel, he was really mad, unhappy, angry and feeling very much abused. The press coverage was as Carter wanted it. It did depict Begin as quite intransigent.

That mood of disagreement, unhappiness and distrust between Jerusalem and Washington continued until the Summer. I spent a couple of months on Vance's instructions trying to extract from Dayan a formulation about 242 which would be closer to our view than to Begin's. I never succeeded; he was adamant. I had dozens of sessions with Dayan who was attempting to find a way of satisfying us about the matter, but at the same time keeping Begin happy because he knew where the power was. The timing problem dragged on; we had sharp disagreements with Israel about the non-withdrawal from South Lebanon. In fact, of course, when we finally pushed them to withdraw in May, they left behind in the territory—now called the "Security Zone", just north of the border—

quite a bit of equipment to assist Major Haddad, the Lebanese Christian army renegade who had set up a little operation in South Lebanon to defend his area against the Moslems and the PLO north of him. They also left some sub rosa assistance for Major Haddad in the form of training and undercover people. So it was not a complete withdrawal. Furthermore the Israelis would not permit UNIFIL to patrol all the way to the border; they insisted that the UN had to stay outside of Major Haddad's area. That was not part of the UN resolution and it ultimately decreased the UN's ability to carry out a sensible UN peace-keeping operation because of this area of which it had no control. This area was governed by the South Lebanese Army, as it became to be known, and Israeli support.

That soured the mood that Spring. There were other matters like the PLO terrorist groups incursions into Israel, the lack of resolution of “Operation Litani” on our side. As the weeks dragged on, another major problem arose in Washington which further attrited the relationship. Carter decided to proceed with an F-16 arms sale to Saudi Arabia, much against the arguments of Israel, the American-Israeli Political Action Committee (AIPAC) and Israel' supporters in Congress. There was a huge fight in the Congress over the sale of these weapon systems. Carter won the battle, but he used up a tremendous amount of Congressional credit in the process. The partial success of his strategy of turning public opinion against Begin was undercut by this fight over the aircraft sale, because Begin and Israel had collected a good deal of sympathy for their position on the sale. The sale made a considerable difference to the aircraft balance in the Middle East. These were the best planes we had and the Israelis saw it in very apocalyptic terms.

During Spring, 1978 there was a letter from a large group of Senators which undermined Carter's position. It was a letter to the President which supported a lot of Begin's positions. Carter's political situation had, if anything, been damaged by this effort to put Begin in a box. It had not worked. The bilateral relationship with Israel had become very tense. Sadat was more and more frustrated. Nothing was happening on Egypt's peace front. In late June, Carter decided to send Fritz Mondale, the Vice-President, to Israel. Mondale was known as a good friend of Israel. This was an attempt to try to improve the image of U.S.-

Israel cooperation and friendship. Fritz came out and had a very fine speech prepared. I was with him in his hotel in Jerusalem when we got a report that President Carter, at a press conference that day, had made one of his unexpected comments which was calculated to drive the Israelis up the wall, just as Mondale was in Jerusalem trying to stroke them to get them into a negotiating frame of mind. Fritz was furious but there wasn't much he could do about it. He gave his speech, he did a good job in dealing with Begin and others, but it was clear that the relationship remained very, very tense.

At this point, Carter decided that it was time to try to get all the parties together again. It must be remembered that the Egyptian leaders had not met with Israeli leaders since mid-January. All communications had passed through U.S. channels. Much of it was about details of the negotiating positions and the process was not moving forward. So a meeting was organized to be convened at Leeds Castle in England. It was a conference of Foreign Ministers—Vance, Dayan, Kamal and members of their delegations—which met in late July. The British Government had offered Leeds as a neutral site since the Egyptians didn't want to return to Jerusalem and the Israelis didn't want to go to Cairo unless the Egyptians would also come to Israel. Washington didn't seem like a good meeting place at the time. The first order of business when we got to Leeds, to this Henry VIII's castle, was to restart some communications between the two parties. The castle was marvelous; it had been restored with a huge great baronial dining room with a table about fifty feet long. There was a considerable amount of negotiations first to decide whether the Egyptians were going to eat separately on the first night or whether we would eat together. We finally prevailed on the Egyptians to eat together with the rest of us. We arranged the seating so that there was an American, an Egyptian, an Israeli, then an American, then an Egyptian, then an Israeli etc. The total group was about twenty-five or thirty. It started very stiffly, but after that first evening, the kind of human interaction which made things easy at the Jerusalem meeting had been restored. From then on, there was no question of eating separately. Even Kamal who was very leery of meeting with Dayan was prepared to eat with him and sit with him on occasions. But there were still a lot of tensions. The Egyptian

delegation had come clearly under instructions to be standoffish. The meetings were held around a small round table with only the principals at the table. Vance was playing the role of mediator throughout. He was very skillful. There were some very rough things said by Osama al Baz in particular which really grated on the Israelis. Some of Dayan's statements were not taken very well by Kamal. In fact, after the first meeting, everybody went back to their own wings—each delegation had its own wing of the castle. Hermann Eilts, who had gone along with the Egyptians to sort of “schmooze” with them to test their mood, came around to tell Vance, me and the other Americans that Kamal was so upset by some of the things he had to listen to from Dayan that he was sobbing in his room. He wasn't planning to come to anymore meetings. He just couldn't bear to hear anymore of these dreadful things that the Israelis were saying, asserting their historic claims to Arab lands, etc. Vance pacified Kamal and the meetings went on, but concluded rather inconclusively. But there were very frank and, in a sense for the first time, direct exchanges of hard positions from both sides. That had not happened either at Isma'iliya or in Jerusalem. In some of the separate sessions, particularly the one Dayan and I had with Vance late one night, Dayan was very anxious to break the impasse. He saw the great opportunity for peace slipping away. He criticized Begin very much for his tactics and legalisms and his intransigent style, but had to be loyal to him as his Foreign Minister. Dayan was always looking throughout this year for some way around an obstacle, some formula that Begin could swallow that would get over a big bump in the road.

That evening, Dayan offered to Vance as a thought of his own, obviously not committing anything, a formulation that dealt with the question of Palestinian rights and he may also have dealt with 242 issue. I don't remember the precise formulation, but it was the germ of an idea which ultimately surfaced again at Camp David and is in the Camp David agreement. It was a way of getting over a major negotiating hurdle that Dayan had offered at Leeds. The whole meeting showed Dayan's crucial role in the process. He was conscious of having to be loyal to Begin's policies, but he had enough self-confidence, chutzpah and historic perspective to feel free to offer in private a lot of thoughts and ideas

of his own and to explore avenues although he could not of course commit Begin at the time. This made it possible for him and Vance particularly to come up with some important breakthroughs. At the end of the meeting, it was agreed that they would meet again at the Foreign Ministers' level in approximately another three weeks, perhaps in the Sinai—at the Sinai field station that we had been operating since the Sinai II disengagement agreement in 1975 to monitor military movements on behalf of both sides. When Kamal's delegation returned to Cairo and reported, Sadat told them there would be no more meetings; Leeds had been the last one. He told us the same thing; he would not agree to any more tripartite meetings. In retrospect, this proved to be clearly a tactic. He had concluded that Begin was too tough a nut to crack without Carter personally getting in the act. He in effect put it up to the United States by saying that we had said that we could deal with the Begin problem—or you had led me to think so—and it was time for us to put up or shut up. It was in that climate in late July that Washington decided that the peace process was clearly at an end, unless we did something very dramatic. Carter decided, against the advice of nearly all of his advisors, to invite both Begin and Sadat privately to come to Camp David so that the three of them could try to reach some agreements.

Q: Was Vance one of those in favor.

LEWIS: I don't remember what Vance's position was. The argument was that prospects were very dim by this time, the gap was too broad, the likelihood of failure was very great and for Carter to risk an investment of so much more of his prestige would be deadly for him politically, if he failed. By this time, he was a year and a half into his Administration, having devoted an enormous amount of effort in the Middle East, letting a lot of other things slide or not dealing with them adequately. His Administration was not in very good shape. Only Hamilton Jordan, his political advisor, argued with Carter that it was better to roll the dice and be seen as having tried everything possible. That would be more advantageous politically then just admitting failure and moving off to something else. The preponderance of the advice was caution and not taking the risk.

Q: Would you describe Vance as intuitively shrewd when dealing with people far afield from his Ivy League-New York background? Did he have a feeling for the Egyptians and the Israelis?

LEWIS: He came to have. Vance acquired a great deal of respect from the Israelis. I can't really say how the Egyptians viewed him, although I think they viewed him very well, but Begin and his colleagues really acquired an enormous regard and respect for Vance. They didn't like some of the things he said, they argued very hard with him, disagreed with him sharply, but they found him to be so honorable and straight and so dedicated that he really gained their respect. Moreover, they did become convinced over a period of months that he was genuinely sympathetic and empathetic to their problems. But he was a lawyer and could talk with Begin in a kind of legal language which was also useful, if somewhat less, with Sadat, but my impression is that Sadat rested very heavily on his personal relationship with Carter. He had faith in Carter. Begin was leerier of Carter. He had a lot of confidence in Vance's rectitude; he admired Carter and wanted Carter to admire him, but he realized that Carter did not like him as much as he admired Sadat and this hurt Begin who in a strange way was very thin skinned. Begin wanted to be approved by Carter. He wasn't going to change to get that approval, but he felt hurt when he did not receive it. He thought that Carter with his understanding of history, the Bible and his missionary impulse about the Middle East, should have been more in his court. Of course Begin and Carter were so totally different in personality that it was remarkable that they got along as well as they did. Carter was extraordinary in the way he handled both Begin and Sadat, particularly at Camp David, but at various other times as well. All in all, it was a very unique performance.

Carter then sent Vance with a hand-written invitation first to Jerusalem and then to Cairo, inviting Begin and Sadat to Camp David. Begin, who had been hoping for such an invitation, accepted immediately and so did Sadat. The stage was set by early August for the Camp David meeting in September, 1978.

Continuation of interview: May 22, 1990

Q: Let us pick up from the time that Secretary Vance delivered a hand written invitation from President Carter to Prime Minister Begin to join him and Sadat at Camp David, which Begin accepted immediately.

LEWIS: In retrospect, it is clear that Begin and Sadat had concluded by this time that the negotiating process between their two governments had come to an end and that a meeting between the two of them hosted by Carter might be the only hope for progress. So they both accepted the invitation with alacrity. There was about a month between the invitation having been delivered and the start of the Camp David conference, on September 5, 1978. That month was filled with the kind of events which continually intervened with the peace process—terrorist attacks by one Palestinian group or another—which raised Israeli's concerns and heightened the feeling of crisis. It also of course increased the sense of urgency for the peace process to come to some conclusion. There were several bombings in Israel; a huge one took place in Beirut at the PLO headquarters—presumably an Israeli retaliatory attack. There were also a number of alarums and excursions about Jewish settlements—a subject that was always highly provocative.

One of the terrorist incidents which had a major impact in Israel was an attack on an El Al airlines crew outside a London hotel on August 20. The Israelis mounted retaliatory strikes against Palestinian centers in Lebanon. There were rallies in Israel in early September by the so called Peace Now" movement to encourage Begin to be flexible at Camp David. There were statements by Arik Sharon about Israeli intentions to establish new settlements on the West bank which angered both Sadat and Carter. Then, a week later, the Israeli cabinet announced that it was postponing any new settlements until after Camp David. This was both a policy of caution and a warning of what would happen of the Camp David negotiations failed.

I returned to Washington about ten days in advance of the Camp David meetings. I worked during this period on briefing papers for the President and the Secretary with our Washington negotiators—Harold Saunders and Roy Atherton from State and Bill Quandt from the NSC staff—and Ambassador Eilts, who was then our representative in Cairo. There were a number of preliminary meetings. Carter was mapping out with the White House staff a very careful game plan for the conference. He was calling all the shots and was trying to figure ahead of time how to handle this unique diplomatic venture. He decided to have only small delegations at Camp David from the three countries involved. He was going to "lock up" the three delegations for ten days or so until they had really reached agreement. He had trouble getting agreement from the Israelis and the Egyptians on this process, but they finally acquiesced and agreed that there wouldn't be any coming or going from Camp David and that no one would speak to the press except the American press spokesman who would clear ahead of time any statements that he might make with his Egyptian and Israeli counterparts. He would be the only channel to the press. In retrospect, this Carter decision, which he forced on the other parties, was instrumental in determining the outcome of the negotiations. The tensions in Israel and Egypt were so high, particularly in Israel's domestic turbulent political atmosphere, that had there been real-time information leaking out in the Israeli press—this might have applied to the Arab world as well—the pressures on Begin and Sadat would have been so great that one or the other would have had to leave before any agreements could be reached.

Q: Would you credit Carter for that strategy?

LEWIS: As far as I know, it was Carter's idea. I don't know for sure; someone else may have suggested it, but he certainly adopted it. It was a very shrewd move and quite central in the outcome.

With regard to the preliminaries, there were phones at Camp David, which the Israelis assumed, and the Egyptians perhaps as well, would be monitored. From what Carter and others said subsequently, I do not believe that to have been the case. It was suggested

that the phone calls be monitored, but Carter decided that it would not be done. But the Israelis assumed that they would be monitored and thought that the Egyptians would make the same assumption. This also inhibited the “leaking” which might have occurred over the phones otherwise. There were a few bits that trickled out, but very little accurate information left Camp David during the conference.

On September 1—Friday—Hermann Eilts and I were invited to have lunch with the President at the Roosevelt Room in the White House. Vance, Mondale, Harold Brown, Zbigniew Brzezinski and Hamilton Jordan also attended. Carter asked us to stay for the NSC meeting that would follow lunch. That NSC meeting consisted of the luncheon group plus Stan Turner (CIA) and General David Jones (JCS). At the lunch, after much jocularity and much good humor on the part of all, Carter then conducted a session in which he attempted to elicit from Eilts and me, alternatively, predictions on how Sadat and Begin might react to various proposals or situations that might arise during the conference. Carter was extremely well briefed; he was really on top of the material and was knowledgeable of all aspects—having been immersed almost continuously with the problem for eighteen months. Therefore, he knew much about Sadat and Begin already; he had met them before and understood their political constraints. He was particularly interested in overcoming the psychological barrier that had been erected in the past six-eight months in the aftermath of Sadat's trip to Jerusalem—things had gone off the track in that period and the Sadat-Begin relationships had become increasingly tense. They had not met since Christmas Day of 1977. The State officials were by and large rather pessimistic about what could be achieved at Camp David. Carter had asked State to prepare a set of goals for what might be achieved. I remember that during the lunch, Carter indicated that he thought the goals were far too modest and that he was setting his sights considerably higher. He was aiming for a full peace, not a partial or intermediary solution. I thought at the time that it was very wise for Carter to shoot high, although I also was not as optimistic as the President as what might be realistically expected. I notice from my notes for this period that I shared Carter's qualified optimism more than some of the

other advisors. I felt that all parties had too much riding on the conference to let it fail, but it was still up to Carter to put a viable package together, which was terrifically difficult task. As we were leaving the Cabinet Room, Carter took Eilts and me aside and complimented us on how well were representing him to our respective country's governments. That was a very nice touch.

On September 5, I met Begin at the airport. In the helicopter that took us from Andrews Air Force Base to Camp David, Begin was very keyed up. He was almost manic in the way he was approaching the conference. He was very excited. Ezer Weizman was very jumpy; he thought that Begin was too confident and he was very worried. He thought if the conference went badly, Begin would become very defiant, which would have been characteristic. Weizman worried about the potential problems ahead. Dayan, as always, was very contained and reserved. He like all the other Israelis was very tense.

What actually happened at Camp David has been well described in Bill Quandt's book, which is the best single treatment of the whole negotiating process. I am not going to repeat what is in the book. Quandt, in writing his book, had access not only to all of Brzezinski's notes as well as his own—he was there as a key player—but Carter later made most of his personal notes available as well. The President took detailed notes in long hand after every session, so that if you take Quandt's book and Carter's and Vance's and Brzezinski's memoirs, you have a very exhaustive description of how the conference progressed from the American point of view. There were no great contradictions among these four books. Unfortunately, there is no analogous record from the Egyptians—there is nothing at all from there—and from the Israeli side whose views are only included in Dayan's and Weizman's memoirs, both of which were censored by the Israelis themselves. At least in Dayan's case, the description of the negotiating process is not as frank or open as it might have been—he was a very careful man about what he wrote. Begin has never written a word. The key problem in understanding Camp David from the Egyptian and Israeli points of view is the absence of any indication of Begin's thought process. We don't

have a first hand view of that at all. We had to infer it from conversations. I doubt whether Begin will ever write his views.

In light of this wealth of information about Camp David, I am going to limit my comments to my own perspective, without trying to describe the conference in any detail. The U.S. delegation consisted of Carter, Jordan, Brzezinski, Quandt, Vance, Saunders, Atherton, Eilts and myself. Off and on, Harold Brown would join for a session and then return to Washington. Mondale stood in for Carter at meetings in Washington, but he also came up on several occasions, particularly when things were getting tense with the Israelis because he had a very good relationship with them. Carter thought that Mondale might be helpful with the Israelis. Dennis Clift, who was in Defense at the time, was there on occasions. Eilts and I were the designated liaison officials with the two other delegations, although we all intermingled. The Camp David cabins were quite confining. Initially, the main meeting was the Carter-Begin-Sadat session which was attended only by the three principals. There were only two or three such meetings during the first couple of days. Carter concluded after the initial round of meetings that the more they were together, the more difficult it would become. Sadat was expressing the extreme Egyptian position; Begin was presenting the extreme Israeli positions. They were talking past each other and angering each other. Carter was trying to keep the meetings constructive and soon concluded that it was essential to work through the delegations. He would shuttle back and forth between Sadat and Begin, but would not bring them together again until there were some constructive results foreseeable. That was a brilliant decision by Carter. The end result was that the Camp David conference developed into “proximity” talks which was a familiar pattern in Arab-Israeli negotiations. Although we were all together in Camp David and did eat together in the same dining room, the Egyptians would sit at one end of the room at their own table and the Israelis at the other end at their own table. Ezer Weizman and one or two other Israelis tried hard to engender some spirit of conviviality and moved around the room. He had some success, but not a great deal. Sadat remained in his cabin the whole time except for walks in the woods. He never came to the dining room; he never

went to the pool hall; he never went to the movies; he didn't socialize at all. Begin did come to the dining room most of the time with his delegation, but he didn't get a chance to interact with Sadat. I assume that in part is why Sadat didn't come to the dining room; he didn't want to participate in any more unpleasant bilateral discussions. Carter would typically eat in his own cabin with his wife who was with him

Q: Would you say that Eilts was a highly professional career officer representing the United States and was not an advocate for the Egyptians? And same for you and the Israelis?

LEWIS: I think that was the case. Inevitably, our particular contribution was the intimate knowledge of the governments and countries to which we were assigned. We could explain to the American delegation the limits that both Sadat and Begin were working within. I am sure that on occasion I have been regarded by some as pro-Israeli, but I believe that I have been very professional. Hermann and I got along extremely well; the American delegation had worked together for eighteen months and by this time had become a close knit team. Carter was clearly the quarterback. He was setting the strategy working closely with Cy Vance. Brzezinski was also closely involved in the whole process, but at Camp David he was less prominent than Vance by a wide margin. Vance relied heavily on Saunders as the chief draftsman of the various proposals which we ultimately began to submit. Atherton, Quandt, Eilts and I made our contributions especially on the way to shape the proposals to become more acceptable to the other parties. The process operated in alternative meetings. Carter was very good about debriefings. When he met with Begin or Sadat, he often had Vance with him. If he didn't, he would immediately brief Vance and Brzezinski. Then Vance would debrief the rest of the American delegation. Since it had become apparent early that neither the Egyptian draft proposal nor the Israeli one had any chance of acceptance by the other side, Carter offered to have the U.S. delegation draft a proposal. From that point on, all negotiations were based on the “single draft” which essentially required the Americans to produce a draft of a set of principles. Then the American delegation would meet with one of the other delegations to discuss it

and then would follow the procedure with the second delegation. Sometime, we would just present the draft and let the other delegations sit in their cabins to discuss it for hours on end. Then we would meet with one delegation to get its reaction and then with the other for the same assessment. Then we would modify the draft to take into account the reactions of both the Egyptian and Israeli delegations. The draft went through thirteen or perhaps even more revisions in this way before the final version was agreed.

There were some very interesting sessions in this thirteen days and nights. In between sessions we held tennis matches to relieve the tensions. On the second night, Carter joined the American delegation at about ten o'clock after having watched the movie. He spent about two and half hours with the whole American delegation, describing his impressions of the initial meeting between Sadat, Begin and himself. He outlined what he saw the strategy for the rest of the conference to be; he described the personalities and their positions and assessed the prospects. He also told us at that time about some very sensitive concessions that Sadat had made to him privately for Carter's use with Begin whenever Carter felt that they would be effective. It was an extraordinary meeting. Carter dealt with all of us as part of his team. That was flattering to me and to Eilts. He revealed a lot more about his views, his strategy and other people than he had done previously, except perhaps to his own immediate inner White House circle. I think Carter had become, over the months since taking office, considerably more understanding of and sympathetic to Begin than he had been at the beginning and certainly since he had seen him in Washington in March in one of those dreadful meetings mentioned earlier. He had acquired a personal respect and admiration for Begin even though the latter often drove Carter up a wall with his legalisms and his rhetoric on Jewish history and his other preoccupations. It was clear that Carter was insisting that Sadat and Begin remain if at all possible at Camp David until the end of the road had been reached.

Sadat had adopted what I considered a brilliant strategy in dealing with Carter; that strategy culminated at Camp David. Sadat was uninterested in details; he was interested only in the broad principles. Begin was very interested in the details and every language

change was significant to Begin. So Begin took a real interest in the drafting and re-drafting of every document; Sadat took less interest, but listened to his staff. His staff, which had unanimously objected to Sadat coming to Camp David at all, felt he was in a very tough position and didn't really want to agree to anything. Begin's staff was very eager for an agreement and their strategy throughout was designed to bring Begin around to something that was acceptable to others and viable from the Israeli point of view. Therefore, the strategy of the two delegations were almost mirror images. Camp David succeeded in part because Sadat over-ruled all of his advisors. Begin ultimately acquiesced in certain concessions that his delegation had urged on him and which Carter was pressing for. Sadat's technique was to express full confidence in Carter's understanding of Egypt's situation and full reliance on Carter's unwillingness to do anything that would hurt Egypt. He implicitly and explicitly put himself in Carter's hands which of course was very flattering to Carter. Begin on the other hand looked with a very gimlet eye on the crosses on the “t”s and the dots on the “I”s of anything that Carter would suggest, which did not create the same sympathetic attitude that Sadat's approach did. Apparently, in the course of the early meetings, Sadat given Carter a number of specific fall-back positions that he would agree to if Carter told him that they were necessary to achieve an agreement. He left the tactics entirely up to Carter.

Q: Were either the Egyptian or Israeli delegations hamstrung at all by the curse of lawyers or were they diplomats mostly?

LEWIS: That is an interesting question. Everybody in the Egyptian delegation except Sadat was a lawyer. There were several lawyers, including Begin, in the Israeli delegation and they were very legalistic. The American delegations had only one lawyer—Cy Vance. He had decided not to take the Department's legal advisor. Of course Vance is a renowned international lawyer himself and he felt that he was enough for our delegation. In retrospect, I am not sure that was good decision. The American delegation should have had a lawyer who was not the chief negotiator who kept his trained eye on the texts, but that was Vance's decision. In fact, because Begin was so legalistic and the Israeli

delegation contained one lawyer in particular by the name of Aharon Barak, who had just resigned as Attorney General and had just been appointed to the Israeli Supreme Court, but had been assigned to the delegation before taking on his new responsibilities, made the difference in the conference's success or failure. The reason is very interesting. As we got half-way through the conference and there were still some unresolved issues—essentially we had reached a stalemate—Carter developed a brilliant tactical idea. One day, he approached both Begin and Sadat separately and told each of them that the conference was not progressing and that time was running. He asked that each President designate one person from each delegation to become a member of a working group with him to see whether those three people could not develop a draft which would satisfy all parties. It is rare, if indeed it ever happened for a Chief of State to chair a working group consisting of subordinate members of other delegations. This must have been unique even in diplomatic history. Begin designated Barak, in whom he had enormous confidence because they both had legal minds—Begin had great respect for legal language and lawyers. Having seen Barak work as Attorney General, Begin knew him to be a man of great integrity. He also knew that Barak was rather more dovish that he himself was and that he would be working to get an agreement, rather than accepting failure. It may have been that subliminally Begin chose Barak for the right reasons. In any case, it was a significant choice. Osama al Baz was selected by Sadat. Carter met on several occasions with the two of them; sometime he would also add Vance, but there were no other Israelis or Egyptians. What the this informal group was doing was to focus on the sticky issues in the drafts that the larger delegation meetings were unable to resolve.

Clearly, Barak and Osama al Baz were often in an awkward position. They acted “ad referendum” for their bosses, but the presence of the President of the United States weighted heavily on them to reconcile their differences. It had its effect. Some of the key problems that confronted Begin had to do with language—for example, the question of the “legitimate rights of the Palestinians” which had to be in the final text from the Egyptian point of view in order to assure the Palestinians that they were not being double-

crossed. The language however could not imply acceptance of an independent state for the Palestinians. Begin was not prepared to accept that. There were several phrases which had to meet Begin's legal views. Barak crafted language which met Carter's and Egyptian concerns and then he would explain the language to Begin in legal terms which would persuade Begin that he was not making any fundamental concessions to his basic principles. Begin could accept such language as long as it didn't imply more than he was prepared to imply. I think only Barak could have done that. So it was crucial that Barak was there—at the right place and at the right time. I am not a great fan of lawyers who involve themselves in foreign policy, but in this case, having an Israeli lawyer was essential.

Carter was very rough on the subject of Israeli settlements; he always had been. He viewed them as illegal and unjustified, but he had become much more realistic about what could be gotten from Begin on this subject. That of course was one of the major issues in the conference. At the meeting of the American delegation on September 6, which I described earlier, he said that a freeze on settlements was the most that he could expect from Begin. There was no hope of obtaining Israeli agreement to withdrawal or dismantle them. He was convinced that Sadat would not give up on getting all of Sinai back. There was no chance that the Israeli settlements could be left there. Carter was also realistic about Israeli security and political problems. I felt after that meeting that Carter was over-optimistic about the chances of changing of Begin's mind based on his own persuasiveness. As it turned out, I was wrong. He had succeeded by the end of the conference to move Begin away from a number of his long held views.

Q: Were the settlements genuine at that time? That is to say were they settlements that Begin favored for solidification purposes and not just expressions of right wing views of history?

LEWIS: The history of settlements is a long and complicated one. By Camp David time, there were only perhaps ten thousand settlers on the West Bank. Sharon had pushed the

settlement process during the Begin regime quite vigorously. We had been screaming and demanding that the process be halted, but had been ignored. There had been some periods of freeze, some periods of double-talk. Settlements had always been a sore subject between us. There weren't nearly as many then as there are today. The settlements then were sponsored by the Gush Emunim religious right wing groups and others. Nevertheless, in 1979, there were relatively few settlements for an area as large as the West Bank. It was apparent to us and to Sadat that if settlements continued to be developed it would be increasingly difficult to get agreement on the Palestinian issue. Begin was determined not to yield an inch on the right to settle; Jews could live anywhere —New York, the West Bank, their ancient homeland. In his view, the right of Jews to live anywhere in Palestine was unrelated to the ultimate political decisions; that right could never be surrendered. It was a difficult argument that had gone on for months and years and at Camp David. It was clear that Begin was prepared to slow down and perhaps even stop for a while in order to get a peace treaty with Egypt, but he was never prepared to agree to a permanent freeze or cessation of settlements, which is what Carter tried to get from him. This was the issue, as we shall see, which most soured the Carter-Begin relationships after Camp David.

There were some amusing side-lights to the conference. For example, one member of the Egyptian delegation was a General Tuhami—the same gentleman who had met previously secretly with Dayan twice in Morocco. He had been an original member of Sadat's officers group. He showed up at dinner on the first night and sat at the American table. He was a fascinating character—a real mystic—who took great pleasure with relating his success as a young man in mastering his bodily functions. He described the time when he confronted a lion in a cave; by the sheer force of his will and his burning eyes, had cowed the lion into submission. He claimed that he had also trained himself to stop his heart at will for as much as two minutes at a time. He offered to demonstrate at the table, but the Americans were not too enthusiastic, although there was a doctor on the premises. All in all, the General was a very unusual participant in the conference. I never knew what role he

played behind the scenes, but Sadat had a lot of confidence in his discretion and I am sure he played some role.

Interspersed in these days and night of meetings—they often went late into the night because either Begin or Sadat would meet with Carter in the early evening after which we would get debriefed and then spend hours trying to redraft based on the latest assumptions as to where the Israeli and Egyptian leaders stood. Carter also organized entertainment in addition to the movies. One evening, we had a fabulous performance by the Marine Drum and Bugle Corps including the silent drill with fixed bayonets which they did on the near-by play ground. There was not a lot of joviality that evening because the negotiations were quite tense; so the Marines offered a welcomed change of pace. One evening, the Carters gave a beautiful reception at the Laurel Lodge with strings. Sadat and Begin even exchanged a few friendly words on that occasion. I had a good chat with Sadat that evening. I found him very dejected with Begin's preoccupation with what he called “old language and old concepts”. I tried to point out to Sadat how much Begin had moved since June, 1977 when I first met him. I also told him that I thought that the Israelis were anxious to reach a settlement, but Sadat was quite pessimistic at that time. He was not persuaded.

The preliminaries took place between September 5 and 8. We produced our first draft on September 9. Then the American papers began to be shuttled back and forth between delegations. The weekend was spent at Gettysburg, where Carter had taken Sadat and Begin. That was the only time we left Camp David during the conference. That was a nice diversion and provided an opportunity for all to ponder the cost of war. It was a good psychological touch.

Q: Did they watch that electronic display?

LEWIS: They didn't watch that. They went around to a number of points on the battle-field and were briefed by the Park Rangers. Carter talked about the battle a little bit. Weizman gave some disputations on military history. There was a nice feeling of interaction going

on. That was a good touch. Carter was seeking continually to break the tensions and not letting them break out.

Q: Would you say that Camp David or a similar site was an essential imperative?

LEWIS: Absolutely. The site had to be isolated. On Friday night—the eighth—things were going badly. The Israelis had a Shabbat dinner that night and had invited Vance, Brzezinski and me to join them. It was a very nice, relaxed, religiously-tinged evening which helped to improve their relationships with Brzezinski especially, who was somewhat ephemeral in his moods about the Israelis—he was sometimes very critical, sometimes very understanding. Late that Friday evening, after dinner, at about one o'clock, I got into a long and probably too candid conversation with Simcha Dinitz who was at that time the Israeli Ambassador in Washington. He was part of the Israeli delegation. He was playing a somewhat parallel role to mine. We compared notes about the ominous situation that seemed to be developing and what might be done about it. I told him something that I had heard from Carter and that was that it had been Begin who had insisted on continuing the trilateral meetings among the three leaders, long after they were obviously counter-productive. Begin had not suggested that Weizman be brought into the discussions. Dinitz was thunder-struck and apparently on the next day he told Dayan what I had said. Dayan then told Begin, who called me Saturday evening in clear anger, categorically denying that he had ever insisted on continuing the trilateral meetings. That episode says something about the virtue of candor late at night during negotiations. I still think that my report was correct, but it exposed the problems within the Israeli delegation. Both Dayan and Weizman were anxious to reach an agreement; Begin was unhappy with a lot of their advice. They were pressing him a great deal in their own different ways, although Dayan was the much more important player at Camp David.

Weizman's main role was to keep some kind of relationship with the Egyptians particularly when tensions were high. He was the only Israeli, for example, who saw Sadat outside the receptions and the general meetings. He went more than once to Sadat's cabin and tried

to explain some of the nuances of the Israeli concerns. He also asked Sadat to meet with Dayan. Sadat had, ever since his visit to Jerusalem, a kind of estrangement with Dayan. He liked Weizman; he never trusted Dayan which may be explained by Dayan's role in the wars and his reputation as a somewhat tricky fellow. In any case, Dayan, who was constructive and helpful in trying to reach an agreement, was alienated from Sadat while Weizman wasn't. Weizman wanted to change that and he finally persuaded Sadat to invite Dayan to his cabin for a conversation. That ultimately happened, but didn't produce much change in the views held by either. That complicated psychological relationships because Weizman had access to Sadat, but it was Dayan who was favored by us as the negotiator. Begin was standing on principle and resented somewhat the role that his lieutenants were playing. That may be one explanation for the outburst I received from Begin Saturday night.

Q: Were Sadat and Weizman communicating in English?

LEWIS: They were talking directly to each other without interpreters. Everyone was talking in English. The conference was conducted in English, which was another interesting dimension. Among themselves, the Israelis obviously spoke in Hebrew and the Egyptians in Arabic, but all the interactions were in English. All the Israelis had a good command of English; Begin's was excellent and Dayan's, although somewhat rough, was perfectly serviceable.

The conference went on for days and days as did the tennis games, the walks in the woods, the meals, the pool games, the drafts, the meetings. At a certain point, Carter decided that he would take in his own hand a part of the problem. There were two sets of issues. One concerned the final deal that could be reached in the peace process over the Sinai and the other concerned the nature of the framework of principles needed for the settlement of the broader conflict with Syria, Jordan, the Palestinians. It had to be a framework that Egypt could endorse and would encourage the others to ultimately enter into negotiations with Israel. This framework included the autonomy concept which made

it very difficult to hammer out. Most of the negotiations were about the framework. The question of the Sinai after a few days became fairly clear. Carter himself produced a brief draft of a framework for peace between Egypt and Israel. He worked on that draft separately with Barak and al Baz. The delegations continued to struggle with the broader principles and related issues.

There was one event that occurred that I remember still vividly. We had met with Carter after dinner and he was very frustrated, particularly with Begin's obstinacy. As Carter left the cabin to return to his own, he asked me to walk with him. He said in a very frustrated and angry manner:" I don't think Begin wants peace. He really doesn't". I told him that he was wrong, that Begin and all Israelis wanted peace above all. They had been wanting nothing else for years. I told the President that the issue is not the objective, but the price that the Israelis were prepared to pay in addition to the political risks that Begin was prepared to run. Those were the problems, not whether they wanted peace. Carter mumbled and said: "I suppose you are right". He had almost reached the conclusion at that point that Begin was looking for a failure of the conference. That view was beginning to affect Carter's psychology. But I think he accepted that his emotional view may not have been correct and his reaction was a matter of a moment and had caused an outburst, but that intellectually he accepted my analysis.

On about Wednesday of the second week, September 13, lengthy meetings had been taking place and Carter had spent hours and hours with his drafting group of Barak and al Baz—while others were just marking time—we began to get hints from members of the Israeli delegation that Begin might indeed sign eventually. That was not the impression that he had given Carter on Tuesday night, which had been a very difficult meeting concentrating on the settlements issue and on a phrase in the preamble of the ultimate framework on the unacceptability of the acquisition of territories by force, which was very important to the Egyptians, but an anathema to Begin, because it suggested that however you obtained territory—even in a legitimate war of defense—you would have to surrender it. He had always argued that there had been a lot of other cases in the world in which

wars had ended with transfer of territory. The question for Begin was how the territory was acquired—what had led to the acquisition. But the Egyptians had picked up a phrase from the UN and insisted on having it in the agreement, implying that the Israelis would eventually have to surrender the whole of the West Bank and Gaza. Begin found that very hard to accept, although eventually the phrase was included in the preamble because Barak had convinced Begin that its inclusion there did not make it binding. That episode is an illustration of the point I had made earlier about Barak's role.

There was another interesting event that came to light that Wednesday evening. After lunch, I was sitting with Begin and several other Israelis. Begin said to me: “Sam, do you know what the President said to me last night? He told me that Sadat had told him that he would never sign an agreement as long as I was Prime Minister. He was asking Carter to have me removed”. Begin showed great indignation and obviously had had his pride hurt severely. He then told me that he had told Carter to make it clear to Sadat that the Israeli Prime Minister is elected by the Israeli people and that would continue to be the case, whether that pleased the Egyptian President or not. Begin was furious when he heard Sadat's real views of himself from Carter. He categorized Sadat as a hypocrite because Sadat had been warm and friendly when they had been together. I wondered myself why Carter had repeated Sadat's comments to Begin because it was bound to be a very incendiary statement. It was bad enough that Begin had heard it, but it was made worse when the other Israelis heard about it. If the Camp David conference would have failed, Begin had a perfect vindication to use when he returned to Israel. If the Sadat comment had in fact been made, it would also have blackened his reputation in the U.S. I thought Carter may have made a major error. In the same conversation, Begin also recounted an exchange he had with Brzezinski the previous morning. He had asked Zbig who had developed the phrase “Palestinian aspirations”. Zbig said that it had come out of the Vienna formula and that Peres seemed to have liked it. As background, you should know that only a few weeks before Camp David, but after the conference had all been arranged, Peres, as leader of the opposition had met with Sadat in Vienna, under the auspices of

Chancellor Kreisky. Peres and Sadat had reached an understanding on a formulation of principles for peace which was much more forthcoming than anything that Begin was prepared to endorse. Peres immediately leaked this understanding as soon as he had returned to Jerusalem and had told his colleagues that if Begin could not make peace with Sadat, he just had proved that he and Sadat could reach a meeting of minds. In any democratic system, such a ploy would have been provocative, but it was very destructive in Israel, given the history of the tense relationship between Peres and Begin—the latter having succeeded the former as Prime Minister and having insulted him in the Knesset. For Zbig to have quoted to Begin language that Peres approved and that we were pushing was clearly tactically very unwise. Begin was scathing; he wanted to know what the Socialist International was doing in these negotiations. He wondered how Zbig would feel if the Republican party was drafting the U.S. position for the negotiations. When the history of the phrase was checked later, it was found that it had not been included in the Vienna declaration at all. It had been a statement that had been dropped during the Sadat-Peres consultations, but Peres asserted that he believed that Sadat wanted to keep that language in as a fall back. In retrospect, I believe that the phrase was actually adopted by the Socialist International at a meeting in Vienna which had been the cover used by Sadat and Peres to have their consultations. Since it was in an international declaration, both Sadat and Peres could accept it as a basis for an agreement. It looked to me at the time as another tactical goof which could have had some deleterious consequences. I checked later with Vance on Begin's comments and he agreed that the President had made a bad error in repeating Sadat's words. He said he had talked to Carter about it, but I don't know that any damage repair efforts were ever undertaken. But these are illustrations of the kind of events that take place in lengthy negotiations; you have to always keep the nuances in mind. On the other hand, it is surprising that there were no more slips during the thirteen days.

During this whole period at Camp David, there was a major diversion—the big blow up in Lebanon. That sort of thing often seems to happen during peace conferences.

There was also a lot of trouble in Iran—this was the beginning of the Shah's period of decline. Carter was therefore distracted some of the time, but didn't allow himself to be distracted for any length of time. The conference was marked by hills of optimism followed by valleys of pessimism. By September 13, the Israelis are in despair and the Egyptians are feeling better since the latest drafts had begun to move in their direction. I remember that I noted to myself that I was arguing the “Israeli problem” too consistently with my colleagues while discussing the drafts. I thought that my credibility was ebbing with my delegation. We had prepared a new draft to take care of Sadat's concerns that the final document refer to something close to self-determination. I had told everybody that I didn't think that Begin could swallow such thoughts and that he might explode. And indeed he did, during a conversation with Vance that evening. Vance pressured Begin very hard when he was invited by Begin to join him in the latter's cabin to get his reaction to the new draft. At one point Vance told Begin that it might be better to drop the whole thing and leave. Begin backed off a little at that juncture. Begin was something of a bully; if he thought he had someone on the ropes, he was not adverse at pushing hard. That evening, everybody in the Israeli delegation was discouraged and were seriously discussing leaving. Meanwhile, in private, Sadat was continuing to give Weizman a very hard line. He also gave Dayan a very hard line. Sadat continued to stick with his strategy —no concessions directly to the Israelis, but giving some to Carter which then could be used with the Israelis if he chose to do so. For example, Sadat had told Carter that the resolution of the future of the settlements in Sinai could be postponed—the Israelis wanted to retain them after withdrawal. This issue could be discussed when the peace treaty itself would be discussed; it would be sufficient that the Israelis at Camp David would just agree to dismantle them at some time.

On Thursday, September 14, the leit motiv had been set during a Carter-Sadat morning walk. Sadat had drawn his bottom line. We tried during the day to draft a document that would meet Sadat's needs. When Begin saw that draft, he exploded as I mentioned earlier. We made no progress on that day, except to leave the Israelis very depressed. By the

morning of Friday, the 14th, it looked like everything would slip away. There may have been parts of the draft that Begin would approve; he certainly would not sign the document as it then stood. It didn't look like a deal could be struck. Begin was very grim and defiant that day. Barak, Weizman and Dayan were working very hard to save something. Vance relayed to us Carter's instructions to prepare to wrap-up on Sunday. He wanted the chronology prepared, a speech prepared, a “Questions and Answers” paper for press interview, talking points for Congress, etc.

It should not be forgotten that it was clear to the Israelis at the beginning that if the conference were to fail, some one would be blamed. Carter had decided that failure would be blamed on the Israelis. Bill Quandt had been assigned to write a speech, on which he worked throughout the conference, in which Carter would explain what had happened and why the conference had failed. The burden of failure in that speech was put on the Israelis. The Israelis knew that or at least they sensed it. So on Friday, everyone was beginning to work on the end game assuming a conference failure. In the meantime, Foreign Minister Kamal and the Egyptians were considerably more up beat, probably because they hoped for failure. Carter had told everybody that the conference would end Sunday evening regardless. During Friday afternoon, he sent Mondale to see both Begin and Sadat, asking that their final suggestions be provided by that evening so that the U.S. could put together a final proposal on Saturday. That proposal would be a “take it or leave it” draft to be either signed or dismissed on Sunday. On Monday, Carter would deliver an address to the nation before a joint session of Congress. Begin was expecting to stay in the U.S. for a couple of days after the conference in Washington and New York and would therefore be in the country when Carter would make his speech.

By Friday midnight, there were a few glimmers of light, although I recall that none of us had been invited to Sabbath dinner that night. Barak had made a super-human effort with Begin on the language dealing with the Palestinian problem and had made some progress. The question of the Sinai settlements remained intractable. Everybody realized that Saturday was to be “crunch time”. I had breakfast Saturday with Weizman and Barak

who were very critical of our draft because of the effect it had had on Begin. They were very frustrated, especially Weizman. Dayan, typically, during the night had been trying to find a way to convince us and Sadat to postpone until later the resolution of the Sinai settlements. Dayan always looked for a way around an obstacle if it couldn't be removed. He went to see Carter along with Vance Saturday mid-morning. This was part of a long series of meetings—Mondale-Weizman, Mondale-Sadat, Vance-Sadat, Mondale-Begin—intended to deliver Carter's views. It was the President's intention to give the U.S. view of what happened at Camp David before Sadat and Begin had a chance to give theirs.

On Saturday afternoon, there was a meeting with Weizman and Dayan concerning the Sinai security issues. We had agreed tentatively to build a new military airfield in Israel if the Israelis would agree to give up their airfields in Sinai within three years and if the settlements issue were resolved. I spent the day, very frustrated, working on a number of relatively minor problems. In the evening, we got together with the President to review the situation. He outlined his strategy for winding up the conference still hoping that a deal could be salvaged, but he was obviously exasperated with Begin and didn't mind showing it. After dinner, Vance and I met with Barak and Dinitz to discuss some alternative language about the West Bank and Gaza issues that the Israelis had provided. Barak conveyed some significant movement on Begin's part which they said that they had extracted from him with great difficulty. Weizman burst into the meeting to give an emotional account of an half-hour meeting he had just held with Sadat during which he had pleaded that the Sinai settlements not be the stumbling block which would send everyone home empty handed to “prepare for war”. He argued that all other issues could be resolved and that time was necessary to convince the Knesset to move the settlements —at least that was what it sounded like. Weizman thought that he had made an impact on Sadat, although we found out later that Sadat was apparently confused by Weizman's presentation. Nevertheless, it produced a good reaction. Weizman thought that Sadat was at the point of leaving the conference before their discussion. We now know that Sadat was apparently prepared to leave Thursday night, but was dissuaded by Carter.

We worked through most of Friday night in redrafting and sat around most of Saturday waiting for the conclusion of a climactic Carter-Begin meeting that was also attended by Vance and Barak and Dayan. That meeting broke up at 12:30 a.m. Sunday morning after about five hours. It was this meeting that sealed the deal at Camp David. It also planted the seeds for the breakdown of relationships between Carter and Begin not very much later. The two reached a kind of agreement on a draft, but as we were debriefed at one o'clock in the morning, it was not immediately apparent that a deal had in fact been struck. We understood that some polishing was necessary, but didn't realize that Carter had made the essential break-through. For the Sinai agreement, it was agreed to leaving the settlements question to be put to the Knesset. That was a formality since Begin had said all along that he would not agree to remove the settlements, but would be prepared to put the issue before the Knesset as a make-or-break issue on an otherwise sealed agreement. It was actually a way for Begin to save face because he knew perfectly well that if he had peace with Egypt in hand, the Knesset would not allow the Sinai settlements to stand in the way of final signature. But Begin would not take the responsibility of making the decision himself. The general framework that was agreed upon was pretty good. I think Begin would have come out ahead had he accepted the declaration of principles that Sadat had offered back in December at Isma'iliya. He would not have accepted at that time the phrases that he so much disliked, such as “the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people”, and a procedure on autonomy which led more in the direction of independence that he was willing to accept.

It was clearly a great achievement. Carter, Vance, Barak and all the others were rubbing their eyes at the success. The next morning, Sunday, Sadat went for a walk with Carter. Carter apparently told him at that time what he had achieved with Begin the night before. He told Sadat that he had gotten Begin's agreement to freeze settlements during the negotiation period following Camp David. Carter understood Begin to agree that this freeze would last until the negotiations about autonomy were completed; i.e., until autonomy for

the West Bank and Gaza was in place. That was a misunderstanding and that is what subsequently soured the relationship.

During Sunday, we were putting the final touches on the draft. Carter was preparing to launch his campaign with the other two leaders to get them to the signing point. Sunday, in fact, turned into a cliffhanger, not a wind-down as it should have. That I gather is common to many conferences in which you think you have a deal, only to find out at the last minute that there are still issues to be resolved. That is what happened at Camp David on the final day. We thought everything had been pretty well resolved. Then the all of a sudden, the issue of Jerusalem exploded unexpectedly. Since no meeting of the minds was possible on the issue. it had been agreed by the three delegations that each would state its own view of the problem in a letter to be attached to the agreement. Actually, we had all agreed on some language at one point—a simple statement that Jerusalem should remain undivided, the rights to the holy places should be respected and that Jerusalem's ultimate status should be left to further negotiations—all very vague and general—but Sadat was persuaded Saturday night by his advisors not to agree to that because it was giving away too much for Arab sensitivities. Sadat was convinced that it would have been better to be silent on the subject than to have a minimal agreement that was achievable. On the basis of our understanding, we had drafted a letter on our position on Jerusalem, addressed to Sadat and Begin. We delivered that letter to the Israelis so that they could see it in advance before they delivered their letter to us. The difficulties arose because Carter and Vance thought that it had been clear to Begin that the U.S. would restate our view on Jerusalem—that our views would be stated in addition to the Israeli and Egyptian views. The fact that we had to state our views is because that was the understanding we had reached with Sadat in exchange for his approval of dropping the whole issue out of the final Camp David agreement. He knew of course, that our view was somewhat closer to his than it was to that of Israel's and he wanted our view on the public record, even if were to be in a side letter. This was one of the two topics that was discussed in the marathon meeting Saturday night. It is there that the misunderstanding started which is not

surprising in light of the weariness of the participants which may have made them miss the nuances. It is a lesson why negotiations should not be carried on too late at night.

So on Sunday morning, Vance read to Dayan the text of our draft letter on Jerusalem which was essentially a summary of statements that Arthur Goldberg and Charles Yost had made to the UN previously in 1967 and 1969. Dayan was very upset to hear our position restated so baldly—namely that the status of Jerusalem was subject to later negotiations, which along with other nuances, implied that we viewed Jerusalem as occupied territory and not an integral part of Israel. Dayan went off to explain it to Begin. He was particularly upset by a phrase which identified East Jerusalem as occupied territory. (We should note that the same issues have recently arisen again and this is now 1990.) Shortly after that meeting broke up at about 12:30 and the Israelis went off to lunch, I got an agitated call from Meir Rosenne, the legal advisor of the Foreign Affairs Ministry and a member of the Israeli delegation. He wanted a copy of our letter immediately, which I brought to him, after carefully marking it “First draft-uncleared”. When I arrived at the Israeli cabin, I found Begin fuming angrily to his colleagues, all of whom looked very worried. Dayan took me aside and described to me Begin's explosion at the idea that the U.S. would put forth its position at this last moment. He urged me to try to convince Vance that our draft had to be killed or that the conference might break down. Begin was furious when he spoke to his delegation. So I went back and reported to Vance, who insisted that Begin had been told of our intentions the night before and had not objected. Carter had given assurances just that Sunday morning that we would state our position in a side letter. The public restatement of our position on Jerusalem was sine qua non for Sadat's signature to the final agreement. It was Vance's view that Begin would just have to swallow it. I told Vance that I didn't think he would; he didn't seem to be bluffing. I also told Vance that none of the three Israelis who were present at the Saturday night meeting—Begin, Dayan and Barak—would admit that they had heard anything about our intention to restate our views on Jerusalem. I went back to Dayan; Begin was adamant. Finally we got Dayan and Barak to meet with Vance in the pool hall in Holly Cabin. Carter and Mondale

suddenly joined in. Then Jordan and Dinitz and Weizman and Saunders and I also joined. It began to be a crowd. Carter was polite, but cool and tough. He said he could not go back on his word to Sadat. He had made known his intentions to make the letter public the night before. He tactfully pointed out that it was not the Israeli responsibility to tell the U.S. whether or where or how it should state its views and policies. The meeting broke up in a pessimistic view. Then Carter picked up a hint from Dayan. He asked Vance to look at the language of our draft letter again to see what could be done to ease Israeli concerns without breaking his commitment to Sadat. In fact, Vance had already realized by then that the original language could not stand and had already commissioned a new draft. It was practically ready when Carter asked for it. The new draft merely said that our new position was as had been stated by Goldberg and Yost, but didn't restate it. This version was eventually accepted by both Begin and Sadat. So the “Jerusalem crisis” was contained and didn't raise its head again at Camp David. This episode was a good illustration of the last minute unexpected events that can blow up towards the end of a conference, which can be resolved, but that at the moment looks like a sure tragedy. In retrospect, I think that the Jerusalem issue could have wrecked the conference because on Sunday morning, although the Israelis were so close to achieving peace with Egypt and would not have wished to have it slip away, Begin might have driven Sadat out of the game inadvertently if he had dragged the meeting out further.

There were more meetings to get the final wording on the Sinai and other issues. At approximately 5:30 p.m., that Sunday afternoon, after the deal had been sealed, we were deluged by a cloudburst, which delayed our departure for about an hour. We then took all the documents and got on helicopters to the White House. The Israeli delegation, which I accompanied on their helicopter, was euphoric. Everybody was very happy. The Egyptians were putting up a good front, but they were essentially very unhappy and scared. Many members of the Egyptian delegation genuinely felt they were committing suicide by being party to this peace agreement. They felt that eventually they might lose their lives because of their participation. Kamal had told Sadat two days earlier that he would resign

because he couldn't support Sadat's determination to reach agreement. Sadat prevailed on him to stay through the conference. It was clear that Begin's rather obnoxious and difficult negotiating strategy had paid off. I thought then and I still believe now that Israel got a somewhat better deal than Egypt did, but that both sides had made a good many concessions. It was obvious that neither side was totally satisfied which I consider a good negotiating outcome. Begin would have some political problems at home about what he had given away in Sinai—the settlements—and other issues, but I was sure that he could overcome the problems because Labor would certainly support him even if all of the Likud didn't. That is what ultimately happened in the Knesset.

Q: During all of these frenetic days, was anything said to the press? Were there any press available?

LEWIS: The press was not inside Camp David. There were a number staying at the nearest town, but they couldn't get a snip of anything. Approximately once or perhaps twice a day, Jody Powell, who was Carter's press spokesman, would make an agreed-upon statement to the press about progress. It was very anodyne, saying nothing about what was transpiring. There was a press center in that near-by town which he would visit, but essentially never told the press anything.

That Sunday evening,We landed at the Washington Monument helipad at about 9:45 p.m. and motorcaded to the White House. Most everyone went to the East Room for the formal announcement to the world. No one outside the delegations knew that success had been achieved. All the hints coming out of Camp David in the few previous days had been pessimistic. So the outcome of the conference came as a terrific bombshell for the press, the Congress, the various publics in Israel and Egypt. Interestingly, when we went up to the East Room, only a couple of members of the Egyptian delegation went. Al Baz was one of them, being very faithful to Sadat and happy that the agreement had been reached. Two or three others drifted away so that they wouldn't be photographed. The Israelis were all there. Carter, Begin and Sadat sat on the rostrum. Begin stole the show; he made a

warm and witty speech. Sadat gave a formal speech, praising Carter, but not mentioning Begin at all. Then the famous picture was taken; this is the one that got a lot of press play. Begin embraced Carter and then Sadat for a photo opportunity which he was anxious to have on the record. He mousetrapped Sadat into that picture; Sadat couldn't avoid it. It was a very smooth performance.

It was a great triumph for Carter, but as it turned out it was not to be a happy start for a new Carter-Begin relationship.

Almost immediately after the joyous announcement, we got into an argument with Begin about the interpretation of the framework agreement. The elements became subject to controversy. One was whether any or all of the Israeli forces would withdraw during a five year period—the language was not entirely clear on this subject. And then came the question of how long the freeze on new settlements on the West Bank would last. As I mentioned earlier, at the climactic Saturday night meeting, Carter had pressed Begin to freeze settlements for the duration of the negotiations. Carter's own notes and Vance's recollections make it clear that Carter, believing that Begin understood, used the term “negotiations” not to cover only the treaty negotiating period—which were supposed to last only three months—but the whole subsequent negotiations which include discussion of the autonomy of the West Bank and Gaza—a negotiation that was never completed. Carter's notes said that Begin had agreed. Carter had asked, according to the notes, Begin to give him those assurances in writing. Begin's recollections, supported by Barak's notes and remembrances which I discussed with him at great length later, was that he had said that he would consider the matter overnight and that he would give Carter his answer in the morning. Dayan's recollection was somewhere between Carter's and Begin's accounts. But Carter and Vance are absolutely sure that they were right.

The next morning, Sunday morning, a letter from Begin's cabin was delivered to Carter which essentially said that in accordance with their prior night's discussion that he would agree to settlement freeze for the period of the peace treaty negotiations. Carter gave that

note to Saunders and said: “That isn't what Begin agreed to last night. The settlements are to be frozen for the whole period of the autonomy negotiations. Take this back to the Israelis and get the right language!”. Then Carter went off to his walk with Sadat and told Sadat that he had Begin's agreement to a freeze until the autonomy issue was resolved. In the meantime, Begin, either directly or through an intermediary, told Saunders that he had not agreed to a freeze during the autonomy negotiations, but only that he would consider Carter's proposal and that he would give his answer in the morning. And the letter that morning to Carter was his position. When Carter learned of this, he made what I consider an unfortunate tactical mistake. He was convinced of his own recollection and convinced that a deal had been struck which needed to be sealed right away. He didn't confront Begin directly; he didn't try to clarify the differences. He told Saunders to get the matter straightened out when they returned to Washington and to get the right language then. He left the disagreement unresolved.

When Carter returned to Washington, Carter and Vance continued to rely on Saunders to negotiate with Begin and the Israeli Embassy to resolve the dispute. They were unable to do so. In the meantime, Carter was telling everybody that he had Begin's assurance on the settlements' freeze. He reported so to Congressional leaders. That of course was immediately reported in the press. Begin, either leaked or gave out directly, a contrary version, reflecting his own view of events and agreements—i.e., that the freeze would only cover the period of negotiations for the peace treaty. It therefore became clear to Carter, Brzezinski and everybody that Begin had not changed his mind. Yet Carter proceeded in a speech to the Congress to state his view of the “freeze” agreement. This only made the disagreement worse. At no point, did Carter try to engage Begin in a dialogue on this issue. He was convinced that he had made a commitment to Sadat that Begin had approved. For whatever reason, he decided not to confront the issue directly, but after I returned to Israel, I kept getting messages to see Begin to “straighten” him out on this issue. I had a number of conversations and talked to all the Camp David principals. I sent messages back trying to explain that I thought there was a genuine misunderstanding on

what happened that Saturday night and that there had been a failure of communication in that late night, blurry meeting. I reported that Begin maintained that he had not said what Carter thought he had said; that it was not a matter of bad faith, but a genuine failure of communication in a tough moment in a tough negotiation. Carter became convinced that it was a matter of bad faith and that Begin had changed his mind by Sunday morning. Carter felt that Begin had made a commitment and then welshed on it. To this day, he has not changed his view. Carter's feeling of bad faith and Begin's feeling of injury which grew as time passed poisoned the U.S.-Israeli relationships for the remainder of the Begin administration, during Carter's presidency and even after. The issue is raised in Carter's books and therefore remains an unresolved and nasty element. Moreover, it gave Sadat reason to charge the Israelis with bad faith, which soured the peace treaty and autonomy negotiations which started the following year. It was this Begin “commitment” that governed the psychology of the negotiators.

And another thing happened after the Camp David agreement. Vance was very tired and suffered from back problems. He had to get on an airplane soon after that final Sunday to visit the Middle East to try to sell the agreement to the King of Jordan and the King of Saudi Arabia. Sadat had promised King Hussein that he would keep him informed during the Camp David meeting. He had not done so. He then made an arrangement to see Hussein in Morocco to brief him, but when Hussein saw what the agreement contained, he was so apprehensive and unhappy that he canceled the Morocco meeting. So Sadat didn't play any personal part in persuading the other Arabs to support Camp David. In fact, he made a number of disdainful public statements about how Egypt, the great Arab leader, had found the road to peace which the other Arab states would also have to follow. He was quoted around the Arab world making very disdainful comments about Hussein—”that dwarf in Amman” as he used to call him. He considered the Saudis as kind of barbarians and not worth a lot of effort for their support. He felt that they should understand that they should follow his lead. So Vance and Roy Atherton, who accompanied him, did their very best to bring the Saudis and the Jordanians aboard immediately to see the opportunity that

the Camp David accords provided the Palestinians if they would only accept the idea of autonomy and their future after five-years of self-rule. They were unsuccessful.

Hussein kept his powder dry for a while. While Vance was in Amman, Hussein asked him how the U.S. interpreted this clause or that clause. Vance made what I consider a grave tactical error. He should have said that each side may have somewhat different interpretations on a number of clauses, but that the text stands and speaks for itself. The accords were the beginning of a process during which the various interpretations would be melded. Instead, Vance told King Hussein that if he were to give us the questions, we would take them back and provide him with authoritative American interpretations. Those were drafted and approved by Carter. Hal Saunders was sent to the Middle East to deliver them to the King. Hussein found some reassuring, some not; in any case they were not reassuring enough to convince him to join the process, but at least the door was kept open. The agreement itself called for Jordanian participation in the next phase.

After Amman, Saunders came to Israel and met with Begin. I had already given Begin a copy of our position papers which were given to Hussein. Saunders had come to Jerusalem to try to discuss our positions with Begin. But Begin saw the whole exercise as a complete betrayal and an undermining of his position. He thought that the U.S. had no right what-so-ever to give authoritative interpretations of language that had been so carefully tailored to the concerns of two other parties. He was angry with us. So while Carter was angry with Begin over the settlements freeze issue, Begin was angry with us over our statements to Jordan. Within a month, the U.S.-Israel relationships went into a nose dive after a tremendous triumph.

Another reason why the relationship took such a bad turn is that after Camp David, Begin stayed in the States for several days. Weizman and Dayan, unfortunately, went back to Israel immediately. Begin met with many Jewish and Congressional groups to which he made statements tailored to his domestic audience. He tried to justify to his own party in Israel through the press that he really had made no concessions and that he had

come out a victor. He took a public line in the U.S. which was tough, bellicose, defiant, trying to convince himself and his followers that he had not conceded anything to the Egyptians. Carter talked to him about this line just before his departure for Jerusalem, trying to convince Begin that it was very important to put the best image on the accords for the Arab audiences because it was crucial that the Arabs support Sadat, who was very vulnerable. Begin couldn't focus on Sadat's problems; he could only concern himself on his own political vulnerabilities at home. Carter's pitch had no effect on him. Begin put priority on dealing with his own perceived political problems before he got home. He also had a polemical style anyway; his reaction to debates was essentially confrontational. These factors produced further irritations on Carter's part and made Vance's job of selling the accords to the Arabs much more difficult. Vance was trying to emphasize what the accords meant for the Palestinian future; Begin's statements were designed to assure the Israeli right wing that nothing was going to change. The press of course was carrying all of the statements all over the region.

So within a month after the Camp David agreement was signed, a great many seeds of discord were planted before its implementation had even begun.

Continuation of interview: September 7, 1990

LEWIS: As I said earlier, right after Camp David, a serious disagreement between Carter and Begin erupted over what Begin may or may not have agreed to at Camp David on freezing the settlements in the occupied territories. In my view, that was a very unfortunate misunderstanding and I am convinced still today that it had indeed been a misunderstanding, although Carter has never changed his mind that the tensions arose due to Begin's bad faith. This misunderstanding soured their personal relationship to a significant degree for the rest of the Carter Administration. Begin insisted then and always thereafter that he had promised to suspend the settlements for the duration of the peace treaty negotiations which we all assumed would take only about three months after the signature of the framework agreement at Camp David. Carter insisted that Begin had

agreed to freeze the settlements until negotiations on the autonomy of the West Bank and Gaza would be concluded, which obviously would have taken considerably longer. In fact, those negotiations were never completed. Carter believed that Begin just changed his mind overnight.

After our return from Camp David, Hal Saunders, who was then the Assistant Secretary for the Near East and South Asia Bureau in the Department of State, was supposed to get it all straightened out with Begin. He didn't succeed because Begin felt that he knew what he had committed himself to. Begin returned to Israel with the issue unresolved. I was then instructed to resolve matters by getting the letter from Begin with the right wording that Carter thought he had been promised, as a replacement for the one that had been delivered in Washington. I discussed the matter with Begin several times and with Dayan several times. I also went to Barak, who was the other key Israeli participant at the meeting on that last night at Camp David. He was by then a Justice on the Israeli Supreme Court, but had acted as note taker at that Carter-Begin meeting. His version of events were somewhat closer to Begin's recollections than Carter's. I could never obtain any change in Begin's position so the issue remained unresolved. Begin announced to the Knesset that he had agreed to a settlements freeze for three months. And that is what happened. Carter felt double-crossed.

Immediately after the signing ceremony and Carter's address to a Joint Session of Congress, it became very important to the United States to get support for the Camp David accords from other Arab countries particularly, Jordan and Saudi Arabia. Unfortunately, Sadat had made matters considerably more difficult by snubbing King Hussein whom he had allegedly pledged before Camp David to keep fully informed during the Conference. That had not been done. Sadat had also arranged to meet Hussein in Morocco on the way back to Cairo, but when the agreement was announced, Hussein was so upset by what he understood the nature of that agreement to be about—especially as it concerned the West Bank—that he canceled the Morocco meeting. That made Sadat unhappy and disdainful of the King. So Secretary Vance, who was completely worn out by his work at

Camp David, was immediately put on an airplane and sent off to the Middle East in an effort to sell the Camp David accords to the Saudis and the Jordanians. As Vance went about this business, Sadat made some public statements which made Arab acceptance even more difficult because they suggested that he had made the peace and then it was up to all the other Arab countries to fall into line to follow him.

As early as September 23, Hussein had announced that the Camp David accords were unacceptable in their existing form and that he was shattered by Sadat's negotiating positions. The atmosphere in Amman for selling the accords to the Jordanians, including their role as spelled out at Camp David, was not fortuitous. However, while Vance was in Amman, he made an unfortunate tactical mistake which complicated matters considerably not only with the Jordanians, but also with the Israelis. When he arrived in Amman, Hussein asked Vance a series of detailed questions about the U.S. interpretations of the agreement. These questions were raised because Begin had made speeches both in the United States and in Israel which put the accords in the light most favorable to his political interests. He of course had to be to concerned about getting the accords approved by his own party and subsequently the Knesset. By doing so, he minimized the Israeli concessions. Hussein was very upset by what he heard Begin saying and therefore wanted a thorough explanation from the United States on its interpretation of the agreement. Hussein, like many Arab leaders, believed that what ever the United States' views were, they would be eventually be forced on Israel. That of course was and still is a very incorrect assumption in light of the actual U.S.-Israel relationship. In any case, Vance promised that rather than answering Hussein's questions orally, which would have been a preferable approach—he would take back the King's written questions and provide authoritative written responses. There were at least 19 questions which were quite detailed. Answers were drafted in the State Department after Vance's return. I understand that Carter reviewed and approved them personally. Within ten days, Saunders was appointed to bring them to King Hussein personally. The answers were drafted to be faithful to the text of the agreement, but they were as favorable interpretations as would

be legitimate to give in an effort to obtain Hussein's support and to induce him to become the negotiating partner that he was envisaged to become under the agreement. Therefore, our language was couched to persuade Hussein. Saunders knew the Israelis well enough to know that if we sent something to Hussein about the agreement without revealing the content to them, Begin would react very negatively. So he asked me to deliver to Begin simultaneously the text of our answers to King Hussein's questions. He then planned to come back through Jerusalem to meet with Begin to brief him on Hussein's reactions.

When Begin saw the answers, he went up in smoke because he insisted that they were not correct. He thought that we were interpreting the agreement beyond the limits as he had understood them. He felt we had no right to do that. Furthermore, he felt that our interpretations violated the agreements. He was very vigorous in his initial reactions to me. He had me send a message to President Carter on his behalf. But he really waited until Saunders came to unload his total frustration with the U.S. interpretations. He may also well have been offended by the process itself—being given a copy of a message to another head of state. It seemed to Begin that we were giving a lot of assurances to Hussein to get him into the game and doing so behind Israel's back.

Q: In retrospect, would you say it was a tactical mistake to show Begin what we were giving to Hussein? Or would the Israelis have found out anyway?

LEWIS: The tactical mistake was made when Vance agreed to provide Hussein in writing our interpretations of the agreement, especially in the detail we did. Although the written material must have been made available to all parties, the second mistake was made when we did not foresee that by being as specific as we were we would engender the debate all over again. We should have kept our answers, if in fact we needed to provide them in writing at all, as general as possible. It may have made it less persuasive to Hussein, but in any case, even our detailed answers did not persuade the King anyway. The end result of the process was to make Begin very suspicious about Carter's intentions on implementing the accords, and not succeeding in getting Hussein into the act. So we

failed in our main objective while exacerbating tensions with Begin. Saunder's trip was very sad because during it he also met with a group of West Bank and Gaza residents in an effort to get their support for the agreement and participation in the autonomy system. They were not persuaded either, partly because the PLO had already issued a blanket denunciation of the agreement and was putting on a lot of pressure on all West Bank and Gaza residents to reject Camp David.

From that point on, the Israelis and Begin in particular, for several months, as we were trying to negotiate the details of the peace treaty and subsequently the details of the autonomy agreement, which could only be done after the peace treaty was completed, became more paranoid about what they saw in the U.S. response to Hussein along with other perceived signals from Carter. He felt that our real intention was to make Palestine independent and that our acceptance of full autonomy for a specified period was just a smoke screen. At the same time, the Palestinians didn't see enough assurances in the Camp David agreement that Israel would ultimately withdraw and give Palestine its independence. They saw autonomy as the end of the process. The agreement was artfully drafted to leave that issue open; it could not have been solved at Camp David in any case. King Hussein hesitated and wouldn't join the process and the Palestinians were under severe pressure from the PLO and were being told all sorts of exaggerated interpretations of the agreement. Our ability to contact the key Palestinian leaders was very limited; Saunders, our Consul General in Jerusalem and I met with them here and there, but we were not really in any position to make much of an impact on Palestinian opinion in competition with the PLO's successful propaganda. Sadat was doing nothing to try to sell the agreement to either the Palestinians or the Jordanians. He was reveling in his own achievements and in the peace treaty which was his major goal.

There was a period therefore of six-eight weeks when things teetered in the balance in whether we were going to succeed in getting Palestinian and Jordanian participation in the process based on the Camp David framework. By January, it had become clear that Hussein had backed off and would not be persuaded and the PLO had succeeded

in convincing Palestinians to have nothing to do with the accords—despite the fact that in the beginning a number of Palestinians had seen some very positive elements in the autonomy parts of Camp David and if left alone might well have participated in the negotiations for autonomy. In the meantime, Begin had made a major effort with the Knesset and with his own party to convince them that Sadat had made all of the concessions at Camp David and he, Begin, had given away nothing—that autonomy would mean very little change. Since Israel was a very open society, the speeches and press conferences received maximum exposure and therefore were widely known to the Jordanians and Palestinians, all which confirmed what the PLO was saying about the Camp David agreements. Moreover, Begin's efforts to obtain his party's support had raised Sadat's suspicions that Begin was trying to suck him into just a bilateral treaty and had no intention of pursuing the Palestinian part of the agreement.

That was the atmosphere at the time the negotiations opened in mid-October in Blair House in Washington between the Egyptians and the Israelis. They were supposed to draft the peace treaty whose outlines had been agreed to at Camp David. The first week went very well and then the mutual suspicions began to arise. The Israeli Cabinet played a very damaging role by slowing down the negotiations. Ezer Weizman and Moshe Dayan were the two chief negotiators for the Israelis; Begin did not come to Washington. Both Dayan and Weizman were eager to conclude the negotiations quickly and were moving along very nicely. After ten days, Weizman went back to Jerusalem to attend a “brit” for his first grandchild and took with him an offer which he wanted to introduce into the negotiations. Essentially, Weizman wanted to propose that Israel would accelerate its withdrawal from El-Arish and some other areas as a token of good intentions—this was a move in which the Egyptians would have been quite interested. The Cabinet turned Weizman down. Sadat then felt betrayed because he thought he had been promised such acceleration informally, but Weizman couldn't deliver. Sadat further felt betrayed because Carter had persuaded Sadat to exchange Ambassadors before the negotiating process had been completed. This was a move which the Israelis had urged on a expedited basis

and Sadat had agreed on the explicit understanding that the quid pro quo would be this partial withdrawal from the El-Arish area. When Weizman was not able to get Cabinet approval, Sadat withdrew the offer for an early exchange of Ambassadors making Begin feel double-crossed. Each side began to feel that the other was welshing on deals made. Dayan during this period made some moves that didn't help. Begin had gone to Canada on a visit while Dayan and Weizman were in Washington. So while Begin was out of town, Dayan returned to Jerusalem to get Cabinet approval for certain key negotiating points. This was not a smart move on Dayan's part. The Cabinet took the opportunity to berate both Weizman and Dayan for giving away too much and repudiated the ad referendum agreements that they had reached with the Egyptian delegations. I should note that the U.S. was involved in these negotiations as sort of honest brokers. Dayan and Vance had worked until about two o'clock in the morning drafting a side letter between the Egyptians and Israelis intended to set a very vague target date for the completion of the autonomy negotiations. For some reason, there was a communication breakdown and the draft letter didn't get to Begin immediately as it should have, but only as he was entering a meeting with Vance at Kennedy airport in New York as he was heading back to Israel. Begin became furious with Dayan for proceeding on this letter without checking with him and then confronting him with it at the last moment and he therefore repudiated the letter in front of Vance and then engineered his Cabinet's disavowal of the letter upon his return to Jerusalem. Dayan became so angry that he threatened to resign, but was persuaded not to. These unfortunate mishaps in the Israeli delegation, to which I was closer than those that occurred in the Egyptian delegation as well, went on for weeks. Finally, the U.S. got dragged further and further into the middle of the negotiations—drafting formulations—which should have been a rather simple task of translating agreed principles into detailed implementation steps; they became much more complicated. On November 11, 1978, a full treaty was finally completed. It was a good draft. Vance tried to get both sides to say that this was the best they could do and that the text should not be reopened lest the delicate compromises reached be all jeopardized. First, the Israeli Cabinet would not go along, but finally on November 17, at Dayan's urgings, it withdrew its reservations to the

preamble and accepted the treaty text and the annexes. But it didn't accept the “side letter” which included the target date for the completion of the autonomy negotiations. Part of the problem was that from the beginning there had been a long argument about the linkage between the peace treaty and autonomy negotiations. The Israelis were eager for the peace treaty and the Egyptians were eager to get the autonomy negotiations on behalf of the Palestinians. So the Egyptians wanted linkage, the Israelis didn't. Ultimately there was kind of linkage build into a side letter but the two were not made totally dependent on each other.

When the Egyptian delegation, which was led by Boutros Ghali, the Minister of State then and now and Hassan Ali, then Minister of Defense, returned to Cairo, they found a very unhappy Sadat who was not entirely satisfied with the work that they had done. He balked at Article VI. He felt that the U.S. side letter was much too vague for his purposes. He had become more cautious because since Camp David, when he was very confident that all of the Arab states would follow his lead and that once Egypt had spoken all would see the wisdom of Egyptian diplomacy, he then began to perceive opposition from the Arab states. They had all met in Baghdad in late October and had unanimously agreed to reject the Camp David accords. Even Morocco, Jordan and Saudi Arabia joined the condemnation of Egypt. The Iraqis, incidentally, had applied maximum pressure on the Saudis through personal intimidation on the Saudi leaders in Baghdad. So Sadat was more concerned at this time than he was at the end of Camp David that there be a treaty package agreed upon that he could defend in the Arab world. He had to have a document that would prove that he had not given away any Palestinian interests and did not look like a separate peace. That made the side letter, which linked the two negotiations, an essential part of the peace treaty negotiations. In the meantime, in Jerusalem, Begin's colleagues were becoming more suspicious of Sadat and worried about whether the Egyptians intended to conclude a peace treaty.

These issues created a sort of a stalemate between mid-November until early December. The atmospheres in Cairo and Jerusalem were very unpleasant. I had conversation during

this time with Dayan and Begin, trying to get them to refocus on the “big picture”, but I was not very successful. Carter was getting increasingly frustrated and also became diverted by other issues, such as the increase of difficulties in Iran. At Camp David, it had been agreed that the peace treaty would be signed within three months, during which the Israelis would cease new settlement buildings in the West Bank and Gaza. That three months period would have expired on December 17. As that day came closer, everybody got increasingly nervous and upset. Roy Atherton, who was at this time the special Middle East negotiator, came to the area to try to break the impasse and failed. Secretary Vance then persuaded the Egyptian Prime Minister and Israeli Foreign Minister Dayan to meet him in Brussels. The three had dinner and made some progress on the side letter. Then in desperation, Vance went to Cairo. He spent three days during which he had some very tough talks with Sadat. He finally got Sadat to accept the treaty text that we felt was the best that could be done with the understanding that we would add certain interpretive notes to some of the articles and if the side letter were strengthened on the linkage between the peace treaty and the autonomy talks and if the letter included linkage between exchange of Ambassadors and the inauguration of the governing authority which was to be established by the autonomy agreement.

During the November-December deadlock, Golda Meir, the ex-Prime Minister of Israel, died on December 8 at the age of 80. As in other moments like this, there was a high level U.S. delegation sent to the funeral. It was co-headed by President Carter's mother, Miss Lillian, and by Cy Vance; the delegation included a lot of dignitaries who had know and worked with Meir, like Henry Kissinger, Justice Goldberg, and Pat Moynihan. There were so many people in the delegation than when the special plane landed at Ben Gurion airport, we had the insolvable problem of sorting out the protocol. There were just too many high level people to figure who would ride in which car. We decided to solve the problem by putting Miss Lillian, who was formally the head of the delegation since Vance had not yet arrived, in the car with the Israeli personage who had been sent to meet her, namely the wife of the President—Mrs. Navon—and my wife and I. So the four of us left

in a limousine to head up the hill to Jerusalem. Everybody else—all the dignitaries—were put on a bus. That way we avoided an argument on who would precede whom. In any case there were so many. The question was: Who would tell Henry Kissinger that he was riding on the bus? That task was given to my wife Sallie. She went up to Henry as he got off the plane and said: “Henry, I want to tell you that we have so many VIPs that protocol has become so complicated that you have to get on a bus to Jerusalem”. Kissinger looked at Sallie in his inimitable fashion and in his best Kissingerian tones said: “Sallie, you must be kidding?”. My wife, nevertheless, escorted him to the bus listening all the while to his grumbling and wit. She got him on the bus and Henry behaved pretty well. For weeks thereafter, he kept telling the tale of how Sallie Lewis had shoved him on a bus—the first time in his life he had ever been treated like that. Vance arrived later and met the delegation in Jerusalem. The funeral was held in a downpour the likes of which I had never seen in Jerusalem before. This just added to the Israeli depression which had already taken a beating from Meir's death. She represented something very important. Also the peace treaty was on hold and it appeared that the great achievements of Camp David were coming apart.

Vance arrived in time for the funeral; he had come from Cairo where he had held discussions about the deadlock. In Jerusalem, we had one meeting—rather frosty—with Begin. Then Vance returned to Egypt for a day. He met with Sadat and then returned to Israel. He then had another session with Begin. At that point, Carter made a few public statements back in Washington based on Vance's reporting. Those statements did not help Vance's efforts because they refereed to Sadat as “very generous” in accepting a certain formulation. Begin didn't regard Sadat's acceptances as a matter of generosity at all and therefore more than ever didn't appreciate Carter's public praise of Sadat's flexibility. He saw it essentially as a pressure on Israel to compromise.

Vance once again returned to Egypt—this was his third trip of the “shuttle”—and Sadat finally agreed to the text with the interpretive notes. Vance came back to Jerusalem on December 15th.—two days before the deadline—and was almost completely rejected

by Begin and the Israeli Cabinet. They just wouldn't approve the package that Vance had finally got Sadat to approve. They were not persuaded by Vance's argument that it was very important that the deadline not be breached. Begin always had an antipathy to negotiating within a certain time frame. He believed that if you allowed yourself to be effected by a deadline, then you would surrender considerable negotiating leverage—I suspect that he may have been correct in that attitude. So every time we would mention a deadline, he would get his back up and would drag out the negotiations. The tactic of time pressures did not work with Begin. In addition to running into Begin's resistance to time limitations, we also ran into a problem created by the state of global communications. Vance and his party—Atherton, Saunders and others—who had worked long and hard hours over a period of weeks, trying to bring the peace treaty to a successful conclusion, had to accept in mid-December the fact that there just wasn't going to be a peace treaty at that time. Begin had been quite proper with Vance and had complimented him on his hard work; he certainly was cordial. Their relationship had become rather strained as a consequence of the “shuttle”. Vance and his party, after their last visit to Jerusalem, boarded their Air Force plane to return to Washington. During the flight, while still over the Mediterranean Sea, Vance talked to Carter by phone from the plane. The technology at the time had not sufficiently progressed for that conversation to be in a secure mode. It was an open phone call that the Israelis were able to monitor through their quite sophisticated technical capability. They had a private contractor, who had acquired the most modern equipment available in the world, who had monitored all the radio broadcasts in the Middle East for the last twenty-five years from his own home. He worked for the Israeli national radio and television company. This capability permitted Israeli intelligence to get advance notice on many events through this one man SIGINT (signal intelligence). They often got advance warning through this method of events faster than Washington or anyone else in Israel. By spinning his radio dial, this man picked up the Carter-Vance telephone conversation and overheard comments that Vance made which were less than complimentary about Begin's intransigence during the negotiations. Immediately after the phone conversation there was a press story filed from the plane quoting a “senior U.S.

official”—a euphemism always used for the Secretary of State when he is giving off the record or background interviews—to the effect that the Israelis had been very stubborn and that their position had really blocked the completion of the peace treaty. The story in short blamed the Israelis for the failure of the negotiations. That hit the Israeli press the next morning, in combination with the intercepted phone call. That really hardened attitudes in the Israeli Cabinet and soured Begin's view of the role the U.S. was playing. He became increasingly convinced that we were supporting the Egyptians and were essentially for Sadat and that we were trying to push Israel into a corner.

Christmas of 1978 was a very unpleasant period. The peace negotiations were frozen. The deadline came and passed and nothing happened. Carter first apparently decided that it would be best to let matters cool for an extended period and not to push anybody. Then he decided that this was too dangerous because at the same time, the Shah's position in Iran was beginning to seriously erode. He may in fact have already left the country by this time. It was also becoming obvious that Egypt and Israel were beginning to harden their positions and although the treaty was 95% finished, it appeared that it would not be concluded and Carter's achievement would evaporate. So at the end of January, 1989, he sent Atherton and the Department's legal advisor, Herb Hansell, to the Middle Eats to see whether a new Article VI of the Treaty could be formulated. Article VI concerned a very esoteric legal issue dealing with the question of what took precedence: Egypt's responsibilities in case of a conflict under its treaties with other Arab countries, or the Israel-Egypt peace treaty. Begin, who was perfectly capable of making legalisms into major issues, began to say that Article VI was the vital heart of the whole Treaty. No one else ever thought it was, but he now made it the most important matter in the whole Treaty. Hansell, Atherton and I and Meir Rosenne, who was then the Foreign Ministry's legal advisor, and the Israeli Attorney General and Ben Elizar, who was Begin's chief of staff, and Ruth Lapidot who was then a law professor and now is a Peace Fellow at the Institute for Peace negotiated until three o'clock in the morning on Article VI, Paragraph V. This discussion was supposed to produce some kind of side agreement to counterbalance

a legal opinion that Hansell had given to the Egyptians in December. He had spent seven days then negotiating over something that disturbed them. The whole treaty negotiations had deteriorated to a very detailed discussion of legal minutiae. That state of affairs had resulted from the almost total break-down of trust among the three principals who participated in the Camp David process. The desire to reach agreement had frayed so badly that one could find million of reasons why a Treaty should not be concluded. We had almost reached agreement with the Egyptians, but when they heard that we were about to give the Israelis a side letter, they were horrified and wouldn't accept it. So the whole negotiating process came to a stop. It was clear by then that the technical negotiators couldn't resolve the remaining issues. The impasse was political and could only be resolved at that level. Dayan argued that Begin had to be put back directly together with Carter and Sadat. He felt that this was the only way the deadlock could be broken. The other possibility would have Dayan be the main negotiator but then the discussions would have to be close to Jerusalem because he needed to be close to Begin who had gotten so suspicious of Dayan's negotiating ability as consequence of the Washington-Blair House round that he would not have trusted Dayan if he were far away. Carter on the other hand felt that he couldn't spare Vance and couldn't let him leave Washington for another extended round of negotiations. There were too many problems around the world.

So with great misgivings, Dayan and I set out for Camp David again for what I call “Camp David II”. Unfortunately, the second round was not as successful as the first. By this time, we believed that this might be the last chance to conclude a treaty. Begin was hinting to me that he was really concerned that he might lose the Treaty. Dayan was concerned about the instability of the region. Sadat was anxious to conclude a treaty, particularly as the Shah had just fallen from power. However, we all had our fingers crossed and prospects were not great. We got to Camp David and Carter wasn't too anxious to become personally involved again, but realized that he must. Carter was the host at Camp David; Dayan and Prime Minister Khalil and Vance were present.

We went to Camp David February 20, 1979. The day before, Washington had been paralyzed by a snowstorm. I was staying with some friends in Cleveland Park. We were supposed to go up to Camp David on Tuesday. The snowstorm came on Monday—George Washington's Birthday. I was called on Monday morning from the Secretary's office telling me that Vance wanted to meet downtown that day to discuss the up-coming negotiations. I looked out of the window and told the office that there was no way I could get to the Department. We had something like 25 inches of snow the previous night. The voice at the other end told me that the Secretary was on his way in and that he would pick me up at Wisconsin Avenue if I could get there. So I trudged through the snow for four blocks. I stood out on a deserted street and after a little while, there appeared a big snowplow moving down Wisconsin. I peered and sure enough, there was the Secretary of State sitting on the passenger side of the plow. He gestured to me to get in with him and that is how we got to the Department that Monday morning.

The Camp David II conference was a real mess. We spent five days and nights there in the snow. I got into an awkward situation at one point. We had thought that Khalil, Sadat's Prime Minister, was the right person to meet with Dayan at this time. It turned out that neither Khalil or Dayan had much flexibility. So Carter was banging his head against two stone walls for a couple of days.

He was not able to move them. Then Carter decided that the only solution was to get Begin to Washington. He asked Dayan to call Begin to invite him to come to see whether he could help in breaking the deadlock. Begin was highly offended by this invitation because he thought that he was being summoned to Washington to meet Egypt's Number 2 official—not the Number 1 man-Sadat. He let us know his views in no uncertain terms. Dayan was aghast by Begin's reaction. He argued with Begin to no effect. Carter was furious and told me and others that if Begin did not come, he would wash his hands of the whole negotiation and would tell the world who was to blame. The President was fed up. I think he was serious; I think he was considering making a speech, blaming the collapse of

negotiations on Begin, which was the last thing that Begin wanted. He had tried throughout this period to keep the onus on the Egyptians. Dayan then said to me: “Look, I have tried my best with Begin. You talk to him. See if you can persuade him! Convey to him Carter's feelings”.

I tried to reach Begin, but he wasn't available. So I talked to Eli Ben Elizar who was Begin's chief of staff. I asked him to give Begin a private, personal message from me. The substance of the message was that I was personally deeply concerned about the state of affairs and that the Prime Minister would be blamed for the collapse of the negotiations. To be blamed in such a manner would be bad for Israel and for Begin. I told him also that I thought he should come to Washington to make one more try. Ben Elizar relayed, as I learned later, my message to Begin in a very tendentious way—in a incorrect, distorted and trouble-making fashion. It was put to Begin in such a way that the Prime Minister felt that he was being given an ultimatum. It complicated my subsequent relationships with Begin considerably. Worst of all, my message did not have the intended effect; Begin still refused to come. He sent a message back, rather haughtily, that he would not consider meeting with anybody but Sadat and Carter. But he did pass a hint that if Carter would invite him to Washington—just him—he would certainly never turn down an invitation from the American President. By this time, Carter had his back up and it took several anguishing hours to persuade him. Vance and all of us worked to try to get Carter to swallow his pride and to try Begin's way. None of us wanted to lose the treaty. Ultimately, that is the way the issue of Begin's coming to the U.S. was resolved. Carter invited Begin for a visit to the White House. Of course, while in Washington at the President's invitation, he could have some discussions on the side with Khalil. But the main reason for the visit was to meet with Carter at the latter's invitation.

Begin came and had some meetings in the White House and some side meetings with Khalil. Unfortunately, the visit didn't solve anything, although some hints were dropped. In any case, Begin's ego was assuaged. Carter handled him quite well so that Begin began to see that it was not the U.S. and Egypt vs. Israel. That had been the real problem

throughout these weeks and that perception had stood in the way of progress. But even by the end of the visit, we didn't have an agreement. The atmosphere had improved, but the problems were not completely solved. We were now in early March, 1979. The region was in terrible shape. Carter was trying to decide what to do after Begin's departure. Sadat had just sent a message that he would like to come to Washington to mirror Begin's visit. He didn't want to meet with Begin, but wished to take his case about Begin's intransigence to the U.S. Congress, the media and the American public, preferably while Begin was still in New York. He wanted to fight the public relations battle with Begin on American soil while the U.S. President sat on the sidelines, watching the debate. The vision that Sadat and Begin would be firing high explosives on each other over Carter's head in the U.S. was just too much to swallow. This prospect drove Carter to decide that he had to bite the bullet and go to the Middle East personally to obtain approval of the treaty once and for all. All of Carter's advisors, except for Hamilton Jordan, were against this trip. Everybody else thought that the President was risking too much political and personal prestige. They were afraid that he would be perceived as traipsing around the Middle East, hat in hand, when the two major leaders in the area could not reach agreement. The possibility of failure was very high and most of the advisors saw it as a bad idea. Jordan saw it the other way. Carter had invested so much prestige on the Camp David agreements that if the implementation steps were not taken, it would be seen by the American public as an empty victory. The President's standing could only be maintained if he made a major personal effort so that he could not be accused of not having tried everything possible. No possible avenue should be spared. Carter followed Jordan's advice.

After his return from the United States, Begin had convinced his Cabinet to make a few concessions on some of the articles that Carter had discussed with him. There were also further discussions about the target date. Then came Carter's announcement about his trip to Egypt and Israel. All the professionals in the State Department and other places were astounded because the trip appeared as an act of desperation. There were no pre-arrangements; Carter's reputation was tottering somewhat at that stage for other

reasons beyond the peace treaty. But everybody turned out to be wrong. Carter's gamble succeeded. In any case, Carter, Vance, Secretary of Defense Brown, Brzezinski and many more came out. The whole foreign and defense policy leadership of the Administration was on that Presidential plane. Carter first went to Egypt, where Carter and Sadat had another of their “love feasts”. Although Khalil and his colleagues were tough in their bargaining, Sadat essentially gave Carter a blank check. He told Carter to do the best he could; he would trust the American President not give away Egypt's interests. That was a technique that Sadat repeatedly used with Carter and used very successfully.

So after getting pretty much of a blank check from Sadat, Carter arrived at 8 o'clock on Saturday night, March 10, 1979, at Ben Gurion airport. The American delegation was still very moved by the fact that millions of Egyptians, undoubtedly spurred on by Sadat, had come out to cheer Carter's train as it moved from Cairo to Alexandria. At Ben Gurion, there was an arrival ceremony, which looked very much like the Sadat arrival of November 1977, although there were far fewer people to greet Carter than there were for Sadat. Fortunately, my sons' school, the American International School, were there in great numbers, cheering widely which was of considerable help. The arrival was a moving moment. It was the only time an American President had visited Israel, except for Nixon's visit in 1974 in the last days of his Administration. We had had a discussion with Teddy Kollek, the Mayor of Jerusalem, about a ceremony that he wanted when the party would reach the entrance of Jerusalem. He wanted to hold a full arrival ceremony with the traditional wine and salt. I got Teddy to promise that there wouldn't be any speeches (at White House insistence) and there weren't. Everything went smoothly though our people from Washington were sure that Kollek would double cross them. There were all sorts of frenzies with the Secret Service people. The head of the detail saw a mike standing near Kollek and all during the “Star Spangled Banner” kept yelling at me about it. The motorcade came off without hitches. Everybody was pretty much up-beat through the buffet that evening that Weizman hosted at the King David hotel for the whole delegation. There was a kind of electric mood in the room. In the meantime, Carter was having a

private dinner upstairs in the hotel with the Begins. He came down to where we were at about 1:30 and the bubble just evaporated because he told us that the trip to Israel was a complete waste of time. Begin had just said no to everything; Carter was tired and frustrated. He quoted Begin as saying that he could not even initial a treaty publicly with his two counterparts—Carter and Sadat—which was the scenario that Carter had desired, until after the Knesset debate and ratification. Begin had told us after Camp David that he had made a pledge that he wouldn't sign a treaty until the Knesset had worked its will, even though under Israeli Constitutional practices, it was the Cabinet that could ratify treaties. The fact that Begin wanted Knesset approval was an indication of the importance of the peace treaty. But we never dreamed that Begin wouldn't at least initial it prior to Knesset approval. So the whole scenario of a major public event with the three principals initialing the treaty had been shot down, much to the dismay of the public relations people in the White House. So Carter was at least quite grumpy at this stage.

On Sunday morning, we went to President Navon's, we went to Yad Vashem, went to the Unknown Soldiers Tomb at the Knesset—all the kinds of things that State visitors do. There was a church service at the Scottish Presbyterian Church in Jerusalem. All that went well. The first formal working meeting was at 11:00 o'clock and lasted two and half-hours. It was a disaster. Begin was at his most hyper-defiant, oratorical, preachy, dramatic—repeating all the “nos” that he had given Carter the night before. He insisted that we stand by our “agreements” that we were supposed to have concluded during his last visit to Washington on joint U.S.-Israeli language on Article VI and the accompanying side notes to which he had gotten Cabinet approval. Another issue that had become important related to oil supplies which had become important during the treaty negotiations because the Israelis began to worry about guarantees for future oil supplies. They were surrendering their oil wells in the Gulf of Suez which they had exploited since their 1967 occupation. The Israelis wanted some guarantee that they would be able to buy their oil from Egypt or some other producer—those were the days when the Arab states would not sell oil to Israel, except Iran which by now had become very unstable and unreliable. So

the Israelis were looking to the U.S. for the guaranteed supply if they couldn't buy it on the open market. So the working out of this arrangement became another sticking point. Begin was insisting at this time that Egypt guarantee in writing that it would sell Israel two and half million tons of oil per annum for five years, but the Egyptians were not willing to do so. There was no agreement on the language about Gaza and a lot of other issues.

Carter barely kept his cool at the meetings. Then there was a big working lunch downstairs that helped to thaw the atmosphere a little bit. That was followed by another working session and Carter stepped up the pressure. Begin sensed by this point that he had to respond somehow to Carter's insistence for faster action. We adjourned at three o'clock for an hour and a half during which each delegation held separate meetings. We stayed in the Prime Minister's Cabinet Room, which was probably bugged. Carter stretched out despondently over two chairs making some unguarded wisecracks about Begin. We met again with the Israelis until 5:30. Begin was really worn out at this point. He suggested a halt. Carter had just completed a very tough summation of his position. One of the issues that was being discussed concerned Egypt's need for access to the people of Gaza through the establishment of a consulate or an open border or some means. Sadat was very interested in this. Carter told Begin that this contact was a matter of his own personal honor and of direct interest to the U.S. He obviously had promised it to Sadat. So we provided some appropriate language to be included in the treaty. Begin then agreed to call his full Cabinet into session after dinner to discuss this new proposal. Up to this time, we had been dealing with only seven Ministers—the so-called Security-Defense Committee—out of approximately twenty. As he was about to leave, Dayan agreed to remain behind to talk informally with Vance on further language refinements before the draft was to be submitted to the Cabinet. That helped a little to make the language a little more acceptable to the Cabinet.

After that, we changed clothes quickly at the hotel and went off to the Knesset for a beautiful, fancy State dinner in the big hall decorated by the magnificent Chagall tapestries hanging behind the rostrum. After dinner, Isaac Stern and Pinina Salzman played some

duets. The toasts by Navon, Begin and Carter were very gracious. I got drowsy during dinner and napped during one of the toasts. It was about ten o'clock and I was tired. After the toasts, came the Inbal dance group to entertain, but fortunately their performance lasted only about seven minutes. Dinner ended about eleven o'clock. The whole Israeli Cabinet went back to the Prime Minister's office for a meeting. I slipped to Dayan as he was leaving some new improved text—our latest draft—which Vance had worked on in an office while dessert was being served at dinner. He then asked me to pass it to the Israelis, which I did.

The U.S. delegation sat around the hotel after dinner rather gloomily until about 2 a.m. Monday morning. Later, we found out that the Cabinet meeting had gone on until 5:30 a.m. We met for a working breakfast and learned of the Cabinet decision from Rosenne and Evron. There had been some progress, but not enough. Begin was expecting praise from Carter for what he had been able to accomplish, but he didn't give much. Carter kept pressing for new flexibility on the Gaza access issue and on oil supplies. Begin was tired and offended, but polite. He agreed to meet with us after lunch for another attempt. Carter then said that he would leave for home that Monday afternoon; he couldn't stay any longer. He had talked to us about leaving even sooner; he was worn out with the negotiations about matters that he regarded essentially as very trivial. For weeks, he had thought that all the key issues had been solved and that Begin was really quibbling over small details that didn't make a bit of difference. That perception made Carter increasingly angry.

After breakfast, Carter went to a Knesset session which had been previously scheduled. Before delivering his speech, there was a singular incident. Geula Cohen, a formidable renegade member of Begin's own fighting family who had taken issue with the Prime Minister over Camp David and opposed the treaty, heckled Begin—as was done all the time in the Knesset—as he was introducing Carter. Carter of course wasn't sure who was being heckled and had to be reassured that it wasn't him. She was warned three times by the Speaker, but she kept yelling and screaming about how Begin was selling

out Israel. She was finally expelled from the Knesset floor. Carter watched all this and then finally was allowed to deliver his speech—passionate and very eloquent—which had been drafted in part by our Political Counselor, Bob Blackwill. He had convinced Carter's speechwriters to use a good deal of his text. Unfortunately, Carter had penned in one line that didn't help. As he looked directly at Begin, he said that the leaders of our nations had not lived up to the aspirations of their peoples. That didn't go over very well. But the speech overall was a fine speech, in part because the Embassy, and in particular Robert Blackwill, our Political Counselor and I, had such major involvement in its drafting. It was about the most eloquent statement about U.S.-Israel relationships that I have heard or that was ever delivered by an American President. It was well received except for that one line I mentioned earlier. Begin made a very poor impression; he was being heckled by a lot of people in addition to Cohen. The extreme left and the extreme right were very unhappy. Peres gave a very eloquent statement on behalf of the opposition with considerable emphasis on Palestinian rights which of course was not well received by Begin, but delighted Carter. During both Begin's and Peres' speeches, Carter got a good sense from the heckling, the rowdiness and the raucousness of how tough Begin's problems were in the Knesset. Afterwards, Carter asked whether the Knesset behavior wasn't deliberatively staged for his benefit as evidence of Begin's political problems. I don't think it was staged at all and said so.

After the Knesset session, we had lunch with the Foreign Affairs and Defense Committees. In the meantime, the Cabinet was meeting to reconsider our latest draft. The lunch with the Knesset Committees was very good. Carter was excellent in rebutting the suspicions and arguments from the Israelis about Egyptian reliability. He had a strong impact on the Knesset members with respect to Sadat's problems on the oil issue, the U.S. commitment to Israel and the risks to all participants of failure of the peace process. Carter then went to take a nap; he was very tired. The departure plans were put on hold pending the completion of the Cabinet's deliberations. We met with Begin and eight other Cabinet members after the completion of their session to hear the results. From the first sentence

of Begin's report, it was clear that we had pushed the Cabinet into a kind of negative psychology—they were tired, having been up all night and having had three meetings within 24 hours. Begin announced essentially that they had stuck to all the positions they had developed the previous night; they gave no ground. They were sick of being whittled away by Sadat's continuing demands that were made every time they had laboriously agreed to new American proposals. We tried to probe Israeli stand on other issues; Begin was not willing to go any further on any. So finally, around 7:00 p.m., we left the meeting with the Cabinet, very discouraged.

I learned later from some Cabinet members that the sentence that Carter had penned himself into his speech about “leaders not living up to the expectations of their people” had become one of the major reasons why the Cabinet had been so negative. Begin had taken such offense at that that he had used it to work up a lot of animosity. This is a good illustration of how very tired people can act and react.

In the meantime, while we were in session with Begin, Carter had completed his nap and decided to postpone his departure until noon the following day. He called Begin to thank him for all the efforts he had made and invited him and his wife to breakfast the following morning—Tuesday. That pleased Begin a great deal. On Monday evening, some of us went out to dinner trying to forget how things were going. When we returned, I felt that the mood had changed. A group of seven Cabinet members led by Dayan and Weizman and including Sharon had gotten together after the Cabinet meeting and agreed that Carter shouldn't be allowed to leave under existing circumstances. I don't know whether Begin was aware of this informal meeting; I think the seven probably got together without Begin's knowledge. After the seven had met, there was a lot of scurrying around. Dayan talked to Begin by phone about a different approach on the oil guarantee issue which had festered continuously. Then Dayan and Evron went to see Vance, who felt immediately that the Israelis didn't want Carter to return home empty-handed. Vance told us that he began to smell that the pieces were beginning to fall into place. The U.S. delegation then went to work until the early hours of Tuesday morning on a new set of proposals to be used

by Carter at his breakfast with Begin. These proposals were based on the Dayan-Vance conversations.

To everyone's pleasure, the Israeli position became more flexible at the breakfast. After a while, Carter and Begin asked Vance and Dayan to join them. Initially, Dayan was not very optimistic because he found out that Begin had changed his mind once again on the oil issue. The irascible Israeli Energy Minister, Moday, was pushing very hard and was very difficult to deal with. After they had been with their leaders for a while, Vance and Dayan met with Weizman and Harold Brown. We found out later that Weizman had threatened during the night to resign unless a treaty was concluded. He was very upset with Begin's tactics; they were just too risky for him. At 11:30, as we were entering the motorcade cars to go to the airport, I still wasn't sure what had happened in the previous hours. I had not gotten a full debriefing from the four persons meeting. I learned from Vance in the car that Begin had given Carter a little more on the formulations—not a lot, but little—but it was something. Carter had agreed to take it to Sadat to see if he could sell it. Begin showed again that he was a very tenacious bargainer. At the airport ceremony, everyone looked very strained and concerned. Roy Atherton thought Sadat would accept the new formulations. Everyone else was very dubious. I told Dayan that the odds were three out of four that the new package would sell, but I wasn't sure that I really believed that. Begin's strategy was clear; he wanted to force Sadat to reveal his bottom line on all the outstanding issues and then, and only then, to ask the Cabinet to decide on those issues. Had this strategy failed, Carter would have been the big loser.

Carter knew that he could sell the new package to Sadat because he knew how much of a blank check he had received from Sadat. We, the rest of the U.S. delegation, didn't know it at the time so it appeared to be a risky strategy. In retrospect, it really wasn't. Furthermore, I have also found out subsequently from my Israeli friends that Begin clearly never had any intention of allowing Carter to return to Washington empty-handed. Once he had invited Carter to come to Jerusalem, he wasn't going to destroy him and the treaty. Begin was simply and purely bargaining; he was going through his usual, very tough, emotional,

tenacious, legalistic, annoying bargaining tactics. Begin was a very tough and effective negotiator. He drove everybody crazy, but usually got 90% of his objectives. And that, after all, is the test.

Q: How about Begin's health at this particular time?

LEWIS: At this time, it was good. His health went through several phases. He had a couple of falls, he had a heart infection, he had spells of depression at two or three different points, but they were relatively short, until his deep depression following his wife's death from which he never fully recovered.

To finish off the story of the Carter Middle East trip, I saw the party off at the airport and we were all making bets on what it would cost Carter if he failed in Cairo. At about 5:30 that afternoon, my assistant, Josiah Rosenblatt, rushed to me at the Embassy with his transistor radio. He was listening to Carter speaking on VOA from Cairo, announcing that Sadat had accepted all the peace treaty formulations just agreed to with the Israelis. Carter had already phoned Begin with the news and the Israeli Cabinet met the next day to reaffirm the decisions. Carter had won. I called Begin, who was by now walking on air. So were Dayan and Weizman when I spoke to them. I had a call from Vance from Air Force I as he was returning to the United States during which he made a lot of nice comments about the Embassy's performance. We made mutual congratulations on the outcome. Dayan told me later that Begin had said, almost ruefully, with respect to our last offer on oil that “I guess we will just have to accept it!”. Dayan had to laugh because we had given the Israelis an absolute fifteen-year guarantee of oil supplies, from the United States, if necessary.

I was told that I would receive Carter's letter to Begin later that night containing the written agreement which had been orally approved. Begin told me to call him at any time, day or night, when the letter arrived. I got it to him immediately upon receipt. The peace treaty was essentially wrapped up; there were a couple of last minute cliffhangers in

Washington at the signing ceremony. Even there, the oil supply issue reared its head again, twenty-four hours before the signing. A new formulation and new letter of assurance was negotiated, but in Washington, for the first time since Camp David, Sadat and Begin met alone without Americans which we very much encouraged. It happened at the Egyptian Embassy. They had a very good meeting the night before the signing ceremony. That helped to kick off the autonomy negotiations the next day and to start the withdrawal of the forces from the Sinai.

The period from Camp David to the end of March was very intensive. What should have taken three months took six. What could have been done clearly in one month took a lot longer because of the negotiating styles and because personal trust evaporated between Carter and Begin in the days immediately following Camp David. To me that was the principal reason why all the unnecessary negotiating trauma had to go on.

Continuation of interview: April 30, 1991

Q: The last interview ended with the signing of the Peace Treaty between Egypt and Israel in March 1979, which was the culmination of an intensive 18 months of negotiations which started with the advent of the Carter administration. What happened next?

LEWIS: There was obviously a great deal of joy and enthusiasm at the ceremonies. As we all sat on the White House lawn watching Carter, Sadat and Begin signing the Peace Treaty on a beautiful, cool afternoon, I was struck at the time as highly significant—and indeed it became more significant as years passed—that during the ceremony there was a small group of protestors across Pennsylvania Avenue in Lafayette Park which held up signs and chanted: “PLO, PLO, PLO”. Indeed many of the following years of my involvement with Israel increasingly focused on the problem of the PLO and Israel's refusal to have any contact with it, either directly or with any Palestinian who had any connection with the organization.

After the Treaty was signed, the next step in the process was to be the formal ratification, which under differing Constitutional systems, would be handled differently by each signatory. Since the U.S. was only a witness to the Treaty, we did not have to send to the Senate, but in Israel, ratification is formally provided by the Cabinet, rather than by the Knesset. Nevertheless, because of the importance of the Treaty, Begin did send it to the Knesset for approval. The debate was spirited but approval was a foregone conclusion since the Labor Party joined most of the Likud in supporting it. Then the Cabinet ratified it. There was a good deal of euphoria in Israel, although it was somewhat reduced by the difficult preceding months which followed Camp David and which were devoted to negotiations of the detail chapters of the Treaty. That took some of the bloom off the rose, but still there existed in Israel a great hope for the future. There was also an expectation that once Egypt had made peace with Israel, then other Arab states would surely follow one by one.

Q: Was this a governmental or popular euphoria?

LEWIS: I am referring to a popular euphoria. The government was happy to have the Treaty concluded, but had many doubts about whether the Egyptians would live up to its terms, particularly the many provisions involving the normalization of relations, which the Israelis viewed as very important. The Israelis were looking for real peace and not just a formal document. After Israeli and Egyptian ratifications—I believe that the Egyptian Parliament ratified the Treaty—the instruments of ratification must be exchanged according to diplomatic practice before a treaty goes into effect. That exchange ceremony raised some discussions; there was some talk about Secretary Vance coming to the region to witness the process first in Cairo and then in Jerusalem, but ultimately it was decided that the exchange would take place in the Sinai at the American “field mission” which consisted of a small U.S. civilian unit which had been established when the forces had been separated under agreements negotiated by Henry Kissinger in 1974-75. The U.S. had accepted at the time responsibility for monitoring observance of the agreement in the

crucial areas of the Mitla and Giddi passes in mid-Sinai—by stationing American civilians right on the demarcation line.

Q: To what agency did these Americans belong?

LEWIS: It was a fascinating operation, not well known or recorded by history. The lead agency was the Department of State which contracted with a private American business organization—E Systems Corporation of Dallas, Texas. It established a small camp in the middle of the desert on a promontory overlooking the passes. The State Department staffed that mission with its own employees and E Systems furnished the logistical support. We had some rudimentary technological devices in the camp to watch potential infiltration routes; such violations were to be reported to both parties. That camp had been in existence for five years by the time the instruments of ratification were to be exchanged. It was right on the line which at that time separated Israeli and Egyptian forces. So it was decided to have the exchange take place at this camp. It was scheduled for a month after the signing of the Peace Treaty at five p.m. Rather than having any dignitaries come from Washington, Ambassador Hermann Eilts, the U.S. Ambassador in Cairo, and I were designated jointly as the U.S. representatives at this ceremony. Eli Ben Elizar, the chef de Cabinet for Begin, represented the Israelis—or it might have been Moshe Dayan—I don't recall who was the head of the Israeli delegation. Their counterparts represented Egypt—I believe it was Boutros Ghali, the Egyptian Minister of State. We drove to the camp by car and arrived around noon where the U.S. delegation was met by the Israeli and Egyptian groups. Of course, as seems to happen in most negotiations, there was a last minute snag. There were a great many invited journalists present; pictures were being taken. When the delegations first met, it was announced that Prime Minister Begin would not accept a footnote in the wording of the Egyptian document of ratification. Precisely, Begin's legal advisors who were there—Eli Rubenstein and Meir Rosenne—found the footnote to be inconsistent with Israel's interpretation of the form of the document. The Israelis consulted Begin on the phone and the Prime Minister instructed them not to proceed. That was followed by about three hours of anguishing negotiations between the

Egyptians and the Israelis over this footnote with us Americans playing the customary role of intermediators in the effort to get around the roadblock. Eventually we reformulated two or three words; I was then pressed into service, as often happened, to convince Begin over the phone that he could accept the new wording, which he finally did after hearing me and his people. They wanted to proceed and not hold up the ceremony any longer. With some reluctance, Begin finally agreed to this very minor reformulation.

Q: Was this classic nit picking?

LEWIS: It was classic and of course it was nit picking, but the footnote effected a phrase that contained a great deal of substance to Begin. Our legal advisor, Herb Hansell, who had been instrumental in the formulation of the final documents, in working with the other two legal advisors, recognized that there was a problem. I believe that it was related to something that had happened at the signing of the Treaty itself, when for about two hours just before the signing ceremony the delegations discussed a footnote. It was finally only resolved by Carter shortly before the signing of the Treaty took place. It was a question of how one identified such words as “Palestinians” in English or in Hebrew or in Arabic or whether the Gulf of Aqaba was called the “Gulf of Elat” or the “Gulf of Aqaba”—these were the sorts of issues that caused last minute flurries. There were not many footnotes; the one I discussed might have been the only one that was relevant in the instruments of ratification.

When we finally got Begin's agreement, the ceremony proceeded about three hours late. But by that time the sun was setting and it sets pretty fast in the Sinai. We were on a rocky promontory with a strong wind blowing. It was a beautiful, barren and rugged countryside, but it was getting chilly. The flags of the three countries were flying over a rostrum; the press was arrayed below with the TV and still cameras ready. You of course can't have a ceremony without speeches. There was an Israeli speech; there was an Egyptian speech; and then there were two American speeches, since there were two of us. The U.S. delegation consisted of two or three of my staff, two or three from Hermann's staff

and several people from Washington, but we were fewer in numbers than the Israelis or Egyptians—there must have been fifty or sixty officials in addition to a couple of hundred media representatives. I wear contact lenses; when I rose to give my remarks which I intended to read off some cards on which I had written quite carefully—this being a very historical occasion— I was looking right into the sun and facing a rather stiff wind. Just as I stood up, a grain of sand lodged behind one of my contact lenses, which as all contact lens wearers know, can be one of the most excruciating experiences that one can suffer. My eyes began to tear and I could hardly stand the pain. I couldn't see the cards because of the tearing. Somehow I stumbled through it, but I will always remember that experience as being one of my most excruciating ones of my life. It had of course to happen on such a memorable day. It was very ironic.

As I mentioned earlier, the hang-up of the previous six months was in great part caused by something called the “joint letter”. This was a letter to President Carter that ultimately Begin and Sadat jointly signed—it had been carefully negotiated—in which they described their intention to enter into the negotiations on the autonomy arrangements for the West Bank and Gaza immediately after the signing of the Peace Treaty. That was a part of the Camp David agreement that dealt with the Palestinian issue—it was of great, great significance to Sadat. This letter had been fought over endlessly. The Egyptians wanted very much to have a strong linkage between the Peace Treaty and their withdrawal from the Sinai on the one hand and the autonomy arrangements for the Palestinians on the other. This would have permitted the Egyptians to argue that they had not sacrificed the Palestinian cause for return of the Sinai and that they had been able to achieve a temporary autonomy on the way to a final negotiation on the status of the West bank and Gaza. The Israelis had resisted such linkage for a long time. The final letter provided for a kind of provisional linkage. The Egyptians wanted a date certain for the conclusion of the negotiations so that the Israelis couldn't string them out indefinitely and never get around to providing autonomy for the Palestinians. The Israelis didn't want a deadline; they preferred an open-ended negotiation. Eventually we ended up with a one-year “target”

date, which was not a deadline but a target. This was something, incidentally, that Cy Vance had very much advised the Israelis and the Egyptians against, having had some bad experiences with such “targets:” in other negotiations. Nevertheless, they agreed to this “target” date and to a commitment to start the negotiations within a month after the exchange of the instruments of ratification. So the autonomy talks were due to begin in late May, 1979.

Vance, who by this time had spent the first sixteen or seventeen months of the Carter administration in the Middle East negotiations—sometimes fully engaged for weeks on end in his role as mediator—had concluded that it was just impossible for him to continue to be the chief U.S. mediator in the autonomy negotiations. Too many other foreign policy issues in other regions were not being properly attended. By mid-1979, the Shah had been forced out of office and our whole position in the Persian Gulf was being substantially eroded; then there was China, USSR—which was beginning to be difficult again—and many others. It was becoming clear to Carter and Vance that the Secretary just had to step back and let someone else carry the ball. That was the origin of the idea of appointing a special Presidential representative as the U.S. intermediary for the autonomy talks. It was clear to everyone, based on our experiences in the Peace Treaty negotiations, that the U.S. would have to be an active player. We would have to have a delegation on site; we would have to keep prodding, pushing and brokering. A number of names were considered including Robert Strauss, who had just concluded successfully a very important trade agreement during one of the multilateral trade negotiations which had been quite a tour de force, particularly since he managed to get the package approved by Congress with almost no dissent. He had won the President's admiration as a skillful negotiator; he was also an important political figure in the Democratic Party. So Strauss was chosen as the U.S. representative. In private, Vance was very much opposed to Strauss' appointment; he didn't think that Strauss had the right temperament or background on the issues. Strauss had never really had any involvement in the Middle East, although he was known as a very skillful Texan style horse-trading negotiator with very sophisticated political skills. Despite

Vance's skepticism, Strauss was appointed as a representative of the President, not of the Secretary, or of the Department of State. This caused some difficulties in the Department because Strauss was quite independent, formed his own staff and viewed himself as reporting to the President directly and in a collegial way, consulting with the Secretary. The staff was very small, consisting primarily of a couple of young lawyers from his law firm in Washington. Vance insisted on—he and I discussed this at considerable length—giving Strauss some professional, experienced staff to support him. We agreed on and Vance was successful in recruiting Ambassador James Leonard, who was then the President of the United Nations Association, after his retirement from the government. Vance had been active in the association and knew Leonard well. In his earlier incarnations, Jim Leonard had been a senior official in the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency and had been involved in several international negotiations, particularly on arms control. He had had some Middle East experience, not of recent vintage however. He was a very able professional. He was persuaded to return to government and serve as Strauss' deputy with the rank of Ambassador. During the remainder of the Carter administration, Leonard played an important role. He and his wife essentially resided in the region—in Israel most of the time, but sometime in Cairo as well. He worked out of our Embassies, while Strauss remained in Washington, as did Sol Linowitz, who succeeded Strauss later. Both of them played their roles as Presidential envoys from Washington; they had offices in the State Department; their staffs were there. They would travel to the Middle East for the negotiating rounds and then return to Washington. In between, Leonard would shuttle between Cairo and Jerusalem and tried to push the process along. It became a pretty good team operation. There were two or three other State Department employees attached to the delegation; they were stationed in the region. One officer from the Political Section of our Embassy in Cairo and one officer from the Political Section in Tel Aviv were part of the Strauss-Leonard team. That allowed the two Embassies to play a significant role as well. Both Eilts and I were deeply involved particularly when meetings were taking place in our countries. The meeting place for the negotiations alternated between Egypt and Israel; if they were in Egypt, a member of my Tel Aviv staff would attend and vice-

versa. This insured that the perspective of our Embassy and Israel would be available to and understood by Strauss and Leonard.

Q: Was there any Egyptian skepticism since both Strauss and Leonard are Jewish?

LEWIS: I am not sure about that. There probably was some skepticism and ultimately, interestingly enough, they had rather different impacts on the two countries they were dealing with. Strauss stayed in the job for only a few months—for about two rounds of negotiations. I think he concluded quickly that this kind of effort was not his cup of tea and he began to seek a graceful way to withdraw. He did that in the late summer. A few weeks later, Sol Linowitz was recruited. By that time, several months of negotiations had already passed. Linowitz joined the U.S. delegation in the Fall of 1979, right after he had concluded the Panama Canal Treaty negotiations during which he had earned admiration from the Carter administration for that diplomatic success. In the beginning, Strauss was feeling his way through a series of mine fields. Initially, he decided that his tried and true negotiation techniques could work in the Middle East as they had everywhere else. He started by trying to establish an informal personal relationship with Begin and Sadat —"bonhomie"—which he had used very successfully in the United States and perhaps elsewhere. My perception gained from sitting in all the Begin-Strauss meetings is that that technique didn't work very well. Begin was never quite sure what he was dealing with and the two men never did find temperamental affinity, but since Strauss was Carter's representative, he was treated politely. I never felt that in the short time that Strauss was engaged in the process, he was taken as seriously as he should have been. He didn't know the region, which was a clear drawback. He was Jewish, although essentially secular, and he had not had any connection with Israel before this time, as far as I know. All in all, it was a funny situation for Strauss to walk into.

Q: You implied that Cy Vance might have foreseen the difficulties.

LEWIS: I do think that Cy understood that in advance and that is one of the reasons why he opposed the appointment initially. Every one had a lot of respect for Strauss' accomplishments and political savvy, but he just didn't fit this situation well.

Q: Bonhomie was not a good basis for relationship with Begin ever, was it?

LEWIS: No. The Texan approach to creating rapport didn't work very well with Begin. I did think that Strauss would also have problems in Cairo, but I have been told long after the fact by Ambassador Eilts and others who were in a position to observe that Strauss got along quite well with Sadat. He was probably more effective with the Egyptians than he was with the Israelis. The round of negotiations began one month after the exchange of the articles of ratification when a meeting was held in Beersheba. We had agreed that the autonomy negotiations would start in Beersheba in the presence of Secretary Vance, Begin and Sadat. This was the occasion of the first Begin visit to Egyptian occupied Sinai and the first occasion for Sadat to visit Israel after the famous trip to Jerusalem. It was quite an event and the two sides arranged it well, operating through their liaison people in both capitals and the hot line between the two Defense Ministers which had been established sometime earlier between Weizman and Gamasy. It was agreed that the initial meeting between Begin and Sadat would take place at El'Arish in the Sinai and that from there the opening session of the autonomy talks would take place at Beersheba. Vance and Strauss, Dayan from Israel and Boutros Ghali from Egypt would head up the negotiating delegations. I flew with the Israelis to El'Arish in a very uncomfortable Israeli Air Force transport—it had long wooden planks running along the sides of the plane with small windows—nothing fancy for the Prime Minister and most of his Cabinet. We landed in El'Arish and met the Egyptian party. Vance was also there.

A special event had been arranged ahead of time, which was truly moving. It had been Begin's idea. He had suggested it to Sadat, who agreed. First there was a reception in the morning during which Egyptian officials, both civilian and military, mingled with Israeli officials and members of the American delegation. Then Begin and Sadat, accompanied

by a few senior officials, and a few members of the American delegation—I think Vance was there, although he may have gone directly to Beersheba—went to another building on this military base. There, we found some food buffet style. It was not very fancy. We were met by approximately 150 disabled war veterans, both Egyptian and Israelis, who had been victimized by the various wars between the two countries. There were people in wheel chairs; there were people without arms or legs; there were the blind. They had been brought together for a reconciliation meeting to mark the beginning of an era of new relationships between the two countries. Begin and Sadat circulated among the group and asked about where they had fought and been maimed. It was very, very moving and made a deep impression on everybody there. It was the kind of event that was very important to Begin, particularly. It showed the human tragedy of a war. Sadat was also very moved.

After that ceremony, we all were taken to two planes to be flown to Beersheba and that was fascinating. The senior Egyptians and the senior Israelis and I were in one plane. There could have been one or two other Americans on the same plane, but I am not clear on that. The more junior Egyptians and Israelis were in the second plane. The plane I was in, which also had Sadat and Begin on board, was the same uncomfortable military transport which had brought us to El'Arish. Begin and Sadat were sitting next to each other in the forward area. Dayan was sitting with Boutros Ghali somewhere in the middle; Weizman and General Gamasy were sitting next to each other. There was a lot of joshing going on. At one point, Begin, who was very fastidious about his appearance, looked at his black shoes, which were always very formal, which had gotten sandy and dust covered. He took out his handkerchief, put one foot on top of the other and polished his shoes. He then turned to Sadat and asked him whether he would like to use the handkerchief to polish his shoes. Sadat very graciously declined. Then Dayan went to Begin and took the handkerchief and cleaned his own shoes. He then took that handkerchief and went down the plane and cleaned two or three other people's shoes. It was a most unusual gesture for Moshe. It was all done in a kind of jocular fashion to symbolize, I guess, the new era. It made quite a picture.

We landed in Beersheba about thirty minutes later and went to the University, where the formal meetings were to be held. Before the formal session started, an event was staged outside the building. The Egyptian and Israeli flags flew together and lot of speeches were made. There were a number of Sadat's associates who had never been to Israel. I remember especially one who had sat next to me—Mr. Osman Osman, an Egyptian contractor, who had built half of the buildings in Cairo and was a great pal of Sadat's. He commented about the very modest nature of Beersheba, which is a nice, but not fancy city. There was a lot of talk about how the experiences and talents of the two people could be combined; lots of ideas were being kicked around such as bringing the waters of the Nile to the Negev and the joint construction of nuclear power plants in the Sinai which would serve both countries and the development of a chemical industry based on the natural gas in the fields of the Gulf of Suez which would serve the needs of both Israeli and Egyptian industries. None of these ideas have ever come to fruition, but in those days there was a lot of hope that there would be cooperation between the two countries which would produce such joint economic projects.

The negotiations started ceremoniously with various people making speeches. They agreed on the date for the next meeting and then everybody went home. The Egyptians flew back to Cairo and we returned to Israel. Vance came back to Jerusalem for some additional discussions. During the period prior to the beginning of the autonomy talks, the die had been cast in many ways. Events took place which led to the ultimate failure. On the Israeli side, the problems were Begin and Dayan. Dayan, who was indispensable to Begin, was a proud man who chafed under the short leash that Begin had him on, but in the prolonged period leading up to the peace treaty had lost Begin's confidence. Begin was convinced that Dayan was prepared to accommodate the Egyptians to a much greater extent on a number of issues that he, Begin, was willing to do. Therefore, the Prime Minister was no longer willing to let Dayan act as chief negotiator without constraints from other ministers. Dayan of course assumed that he would continue in that role since he was still the Foreign Minister. But he discovered, shortly after the Peace Treaty was signed,

that Begin did not intend to allow him much freedom as chief negotiator, but preferred to have a Cabinet committee of six Ministers including Ariel Sharon as the negotiating team. Dayan then recognized that his chances of succeeding in the autonomy negotiations, under constraints of a Cabinet committee consisting primarily of conservative Ministers, would be pretty slim. He didn't want any part of such a process. He initially told Begin to appoint another chief negotiator. Begin named Dr. Joseph Borg, who was then the Minister of Interior and who had for many years represented the national religious party in the Cabinet. Borg had not had any real foreign policy experience, though he had traveled widely all over the world among Jewish circles. He was a very distinguished Orthodox Jewish scholar—he was funny, erudite and a conciliator by instinct—not a leader. But the idea that Dayan, the Foreign Minister, would sit on a Committee headed by Joseph Borg which would steer the Israeli position on the autonomy talks, boggled the mind. It could never have worked. Formally, as long as he remained Foreign Minister, Dayan had to be part of the Committee and after a good deal of foot-dragging, he allowed his staff to participate in the Committee's staff work. In fact, however, I am convinced now in retrospect that Dayan had already decided to leave the Cabinet. He believed that Begin was already regretting some of the concessions he made in the Peace Treaty, particularly on the definition of “autonomy” in the Camp David Accords. Begin was determined to retreat from the agreed phraseology in some manner during the course of the actual autonomy negotiations. He wanted to maintain a tighter Israeli control over the territories than might have been understood in the Accords. Dayan did not believe that this was an appropriate course and didn't want anything to do with it. In the Fall of 1979, Dayan resigned from the Cabinet and broke formally with Begin at that point. He went into political exile for a while, became quite ill; then he tried to form his own political party and ran in 1981 as the leader of a small splinter party for the first time in his life. He only got two seats in the Cabinet and died soon thereafter.

The fact that Dayan took himself out of the game after seeing the handwriting on the wall meant that Begin was going to keep personally very tight control over the negotiations.

He would work through Dr. Borg and his Committee, but he would be in control. All the Committee members would sit on the negotiating sessions—six Israeli Ministers appeared at these meetings, which on the face of it was not a very efficient method of operation. On the Egyptian side, the die had been cast by the fact that after Camp David, despite the efforts that I described earlier, we had been unable to get the Jordanians or Palestinians from the territories to agree to take part in the post-Camp David process—i.e., the autonomy negotiations. The Egyptians therefore were left in the position of having to represent the Palestinian interests in these negotiations. Sadat had once said grandly that there was no problem if the Palestinians were not involved; he would represent the Palestinian cause and defend their interest most adequately. The formula was unworkable. The Egyptian delegation knew very little about what really was happening in the occupied territories; they had had no representation in Gaza since 1967; they had very limited knowledge of how those territories had changed from that time. They knew little about the inter-mingling of the economies of Israel and the occupied territories; they knew little about the water problems; they knew little about security problems. They did not have an adequate grasp of the situation. Moreover, even after they began to visit the territories during the negotiating missions—they tried to familiarize themselves about what the land and people they were negotiating about—they felt totally constrained since there were no Palestinians with them. They were deathly afraid of being attacked by the PLO or by other Arab States for selling out Palestinian interests. The Egyptians therefore were in not in a position to bargain or to make any compromises. They could only take rhetorical positions on issues—positions of principle which could be defended to the Arab audiences. In the period after Camp David and particularly after the signing of the Peace Treaty, it must be remembered that Egypt was being ostracized by the Arab world. In fact, after Camp David, they were partially ostracized, but no one broke diplomatic relations with them. The Saudis and others hoped against hope that the Egyptians would not proceed with the Peace Treaty, but when that was signed, there was a summit convened in Baghdad. The Iraqis put on a great deal of pressure. In fact, throughout the period the Syrians, the Iraqis and the PLO...

Q: The question that came to mind is, Arafat and other PLO factions, were they sideswiping Sadat or were they....?

LEWIS: Yes. Throughout this period, particularly after the treaty was signed, there was a full-court press by Syria, the PLO and Iraqis, in particular the Iraqis, to attack Sadat. The Iraqis hosted this Baghdad meeting at which Arab League's decision to ostracize Egypt was agreed. It was a summit that was very tumultuous; the Saudis were still hanging back about severing all ties with Egypt, and we learned later that Iraq's Saddam Hussein, in particular, put some very brutal threats and pressures on the Saudis to force them to go along, including crude personal threats to Prince Fahd himself.* * * * *

Continuation of interview: August 12, 1994

Q: Sam, I believe you wanted now to add some inserts into previous discussions. Where would you like to start?

LEWIS: I would like to start with interview 8, dated April 30, 1991. During that interview, I dealt with the period right after the signing of the peace treaty between Egypt and Israel in 1979. I want now to complete that period through the end of the Carter administration —end of 1980.This was a period that began with a lot of hope in light of the signing of the peace treaty. There was hope that in a very few months we could complete the negotiations on the second part of Camp David—the autonomy agreement. That would have completed the whole Camp David framework. That aspiration ultimately came to naught. I mentioned earlier the role that Bob Strauss played as the first U.S. Special Representative. He in fact took over from Secretary Vance. I suggested that Strauss was not very well suited for the role. He came to the same conclusion himself soon after taking the job—after one or two rounds of negotiations. So he spent most of the summer of 1979 maneuvering to get himself out of the job. By early Fall, he had succeeded and was replaced by Sol Linowitz. Sol carried the negotiations through the rest of 1979 and 1980. Sol was a much better choice for the job. We all believed that although the odds

were very much against reaching agreement, had Linowitz been appointed first and had he been able to carry the negotiations from the beginning, there might have been a chance that we might have achieved success in the autonomy talks. As I said, we recognized that the odds of success were slim because the Egyptians were hamstrung because they had no support from the Palestinians or the Jordanians; they could not afford the risk of making any concessions on matters of primary interest to another party. They would have been severely criticized in the Arab world if they had been perceived as giving away any Palestinian rights. It is quite likely that Linowitz would not have achieved success, but he had a better crack at it than Strauss.

Early on, Sol established a highly professional negotiating style with both Sadat and Begin. He managed to win their confidence. He worked hard; he used his staff extremely well. He was determined to achieve success and as I said, he might have done so had he been in on the process from the beginning. One of the problems he faced was that we had agreed, albeit reluctantly, to place a deadline in the famous joint letter that Sadat and Begin ultimately sent to Carter. The target for negotiations was one year. I should note that the Egyptians had initially been the party that had insisted on a deadline and that it be tied closely to the peace treaty. The Israelis also wanted a deadline, but for different reasons. Cy Vance tried to talk them out of it. His experiences as a negotiator had led him to the conclusion that deadlines were usually counter-productive. The Israelis wouldn't agree to a tight deadline, but did agree to a “target” date; they wanted to be sure that the completion of the peace treaty was not dependent on reaching agreement on the Palestinian issue. There was a connection, but it was very loose—much less than the Egyptians wanted.

It became apparent soon after the beginning of the negotiations that such a deadline was self-defeating. In the first place, both sides became quite wary about moving too rapidly. They both felt that they had lots of time. We had very little luck in encouraging them to move faster. We were always worried that unforeseen events—like eruptions in Lebanon which had occurred often—could derail the whole process. So we were anxious for an

early agreement. But we were unable to convince the Israelis and the Egyptians. Maybe we didn't try hard enough although we discussed the issue of pace often enough.

The first few months of the negotiations went very slowly. As we approached the “target” date, we ran into another effect which also slowed any potential progress. Particularly the Israelis, but also the Egyptians, became very nervous about making decisions under the pressure of an impending deadline. They feared of course making the wrong decisions under time pressures. So in the Spring, 1980, there came to be a tacit understanding between the two parties to essentially ignore the “target” date. During the Summer, 1979, as the negotiations struggled to begin, Dayan bowed out of the process. He had a cancer operation, which put him out of action, although never relinquishing his position as Foreign Minister. He resigned in early fall. Dr. Borg headed the Israeli team, with great caution, deference and care. Begin was actually pulling the strings. He had become convinced that he had given away more at Camp David concerning, the Palestinians, the West Bank and Gaza, than he had intended. So he was determined to enforce the strictest and narrowest interpretation of the autonomy concept. That made it even more unlikely that an agreement could be reached.

In the meantime, on an intermittent basis, the administration had been conducting very quiet, surreptitious probings of the PLO views through unofficial and clandestine representatives. CIA was involved in some of them. There were also some American private citizens who were carrying messages back and forth. These contacts were often probes intended to clarify the limits of PLO acceptance of certain formulations. Hal Saunders, who was then the Assistant Secretary for NEA, was an important player. He did not have any personal contacts with the PLO, but knew what was going on; he was the principal expert in the U.S. government about PLO attitudes.

One of these contacts became known early August, 1979. That was the one that involved Andy Young, then our Ambassador to the UN. He had attended a social gathering in July, which was also “unexpectantly” attended by a PLO official. The two of them held a

conversation, much to the displeasure of Vance and Carter. There was in existence at the time a prohibition against any U.S. government official having contact with any PLO representative, even though there had been some clandestine contacts. This meeting finally forced Young to resign, primarily because Vance was so angry. When the meeting became public—after the Israelis heard about it and publicized it—Young was asked about it. He gave an inaccurate version of events; he essentially denied that such a meeting had taken place and later had to explain the meeting and his first version of events. Vance became furious and made an issue, not so much about the meeting, but of Young's not leveling with him initially. I think Vance insisted to the President that Young be relieved of his duties. Young was very close to Carter, who was very happy that Young had taken the Ambassador's job. Vance's insistence must have created considerable friction between himself and the President. In any case, Young resigned in the middle of August. It was clear that the contact he had made with the PLO was on his own initiative. It was the subsequent attempt at “cover-up” that made Vance angry.

The questions of contacts with the PLO kept being repeated throughout the Carter administration. There was some indirect relationship involving Vance, the Saudis and the PLO in 1977. Whenever the Israelis—and Begin in particular—suspected any U.S. relationships with the PLO, they would generate a flurry of press leaks and attacks. That put Carter always on the defensive, having to deny any such occurrences. He was very unhappy about this situation, as many of us were. It forced us back to a strict interpretation of “PLO contacts” commitment that Carter had promulgated early in his administration. The original commitment on this subject had been made by Kissinger to the Israelis in writing in connection with the second Israel-Egypt disengagement agreement of 1975. That agreement included a provision that the U.S. would have no negotiations with the PLO. At the time, that was not interpreted as preventing the U.S. from talking to the PLO, but Carter, upon taking office, had publicly interpreted the limitation to be much more severe. That, in the minds of many U.S. officials, became self-defeating; it would have been helpful to have at least the possibility of having conversations with the PLO.

But the PLO issue kept raising its head. It came up again later that year—November, I think—when Brzezinski, while in Algiers, accidentally met Arafat at a large diplomatic reception. They shook hands and a photograph was taken. It was barely a contact, but it set off a huge flurry of Israeli news reports and speculation that put Carter on the defensive again. Losing Andy Young over this issue embittered Carter. It was one of the issues that beginning in 1979 and spilling over into 1980 soured Carter's views of the Israelis and Begin particularly.

Our main contacts with the PLO were taking place in Beirut, through the CIA station there. There were also people in New York, working for non-profit organizations, who had very good contacts with the Palestinians. They also played a diplomatic role which was useful, but would have been disavowed had they become public.

By early Fall of 1979, the autonomy negotiations were essentially stalled. Jewish settlements were continuing to be developed on the West Bank and Gaza, giving rise to our continuing concern which had started almost immediately after Camp David, where the issue had never been resolved. There were also troubles in Lebanon and along the Israel-Lebanon border. That forced Strauss, in his trips to the area, to discuss Lebanon as well as the autonomy negotiations. An interesting dinner was held at the Israeli Embassy on September 18 in honor of Ezer Weizman, the Israeli Defense Minister, who was in Washington at the time. He was there to discuss co-production issues, especially opportunities to co-produce fighter aircraft in Israel. He also was in Washington to discuss other weapon acquisitions. Hal Saunders attended the dinner and was attacked by Weizman publicly in front of a number of journalists—that was his modus operandi—on the issue of Israel's bombing of Lebanon and the U.S.'s reaction. That was only one example of the increasing number of arguments that we were having with Israel about its conduct in the post-treaty period. We had anticipated a much smoother relationship after Camp David.

In October, Strauss stated that he was not at all certain that the autonomy negotiations could be completed by the following May, as had been planned. Shortly thereafter, Dayan resigned. Linowitz became the chief U.S. negotiator in November-December, 1979. That meant that for about six months the negotiations had really stalled. So when Linowitz started his work, he only had about five months left before the target date was to be reached. That is why I say that he really had his hands tied behind him when he took the assignment. Linowitz became very active in December; he held meetings all around the region. In Israel, he saw Begin and other Cabinet officials. He brought a lot of fresh ideas and energy with him. So there was a brief period of a couple of months when there was a spurt of hope that the negotiations might be successful. Linowitz was assisted primarily by two people: Ned Walker—a very able young career officer, now our Ambassador in Cairo—and a young lawyer, Andy Marks, from his law firm. Both were extremely able. In addition, he relied heavily on Jim Leonard, who was his deputy, on the staff left over from the Strauss days and on our two Ambassadors to Egypt and Israel and their staffs. He also worked closely with NEA. He fit very well into the bureaucratic framework. Having negotiated the Panama Canal treaty, Linowitz was very familiar with the Washington scene and how to navigate successfully between the White House and the State Department. He used his close connections with Carter very effectively, but he worked closely and well with Vance. The Secretary never felt threatened by Linowitz as he had by Strauss.

Despite Linowitz' infusion of new ideas and energy, time passed rapidly without any discernable movement. Many other events were taking place in other parts of the world—the USSR was becoming a threat in Afghanistan, Iran was tottering and the Iranian “student” take-over of our Embassy triggered the hostage crisis which ran on throughout the rest of Carter's term. So Carter was preoccupied with many other issues. The urgency had in fact gone out of the autonomy negotiations, as far as the U.S. administration was concerned. Periodically, the Israelis would take some actions which would upset Carter—new settlements, some Begin dyspeptic comments. Linowitz was working very hard trying to make progress, but he did not have the energetic support that Carter had given prior

peace accord efforts. By Spring of 1980, the Iran hostage crisis became the critical issue and caused Vance's resignation.

We were rapidly approaching the May 26 target date. In early 1980, we were beginning to acknowledge that there was no chance of an agreement. Carter had finally agreed, after considerable discussion, that there was no alternative except to slog ahead, trying to get around the target date as best we could. An effort was being made in the Security Council, led by the Europeans, to amend UN Resolution 242. The question for us was whether we would veto that effort. That issue generated considerable argument within the administration. The President finally decided that we would veto any effort to amend 242 at Begin's insistence, although by this time, Carter had become very disenchanted with Begin. The latter had gone to Washington in mid-April; I went with him, as I normally did. That visit turned out to be a stand-off. Begin tabled four principles that had to be met if the autonomy talks were to proceed. Carter tried, against my advice, to finesse the whole issue; he wanted Linowitz to discuss these matters with Begin, although the principles were not to be confronted, but rather skirted. That enabled Begin to return to Jerusalem thinking that Carter had accepted his preconditions to further negotiations. Carter did get Begin's commitment to “continuous intensive negotiations over the next forty days” to try to narrow the existing differences on the autonomy agreement by May 26. That commitment fell by the wayside as soon as the Israeli party returned. There were about four or five days of negotiations, but when Begin's four preconditions became known to the Egyptians, they were furious. The talks began to disintegrate. Begin then withdrew them as preconditions, but they remained as principles. This was another illustration of Begin's very annoying, but brilliant negotiating tactics. He would make a major issue of a procedural point—e.g., a “precondition”—; he would grudgingly retreat from the procedural point, but essentially not change the substantive nature of his approach. He would therefore, while taking credit for making a concession, not change his substantive position one iota. He used this ploy repeatedly and we were never able to cope with it diplomatically. Finally, the Israelis became serious during the discussions in Herzliyya

at the end of April about one issue that had been Begin's fourth principle. That question concerned how Israeli security would be treated in the autonomy regime. Begin insisted that Israel had to have full responsibility for both external and internal security. Agreement was finally reached that there would be two ministerial level discussions, which turned out to be very explosive, largely as result of a massacre of a group of Yeshiva students that had just taken place in Hebron. There was a major uproar, as you can well imagine, in Israel. General Hassan Ali, who was leading the Egyptian delegation, chose the day of the funeral for the massacre victims to table the Egyptian plan. Weizman, Abrasha Tamir, Burg, Sharon and the rest of the Israeli delegation were amazed and dismayed by this poor timing. Weizman, as Minister of Defense, the chairman of the Israeli team, was statesmanlike and careful, but the Egyptians had presented their security formulation at the worst possible time. That episode was another illustration of how some discussions that might have looked even slightly promising immediately atrophied because of outside factors, the “devil in the details”, and lack of cultural empathy between Israelis and Egyptians.

The negotiating parties were preparing for another meeting when Sadat canceled it. That, among other things, led Sol Linowitz to send some very discouraging reports to Washington. Carter and Muskie, now the Secretary of State after Vance's resignation, decided to have a full review of the Arab-Israeli negotiations. I got a call on May 9 requesting me to return to Washington as soon as possible. Roy Atherton in Cairo received a similar call. On Sunday afternoon, I met with Hal Saunders, Mike Sterner—his deputy for the negotiations—David Korn—the Director of the Office for Israel Affairs—Roy Atherton, Linowitz and others. We reviewed a paper that had been drafted in NEA which was going to be discussed with the President on the following morning. The paper postulated essentially two options: a) try to overlook the target date and find some means to keep the negotiations going or; b) try to bring the negotiations to a head, forcing an agreement in the very near future. All of us believed that the second option was a non-

starter. We all preferred option (a), but we believed that Carter really preferred option (b). That forced us to consider various formulations for implementing option (b).

On the Monday morning, we met for breakfast at 7:00 a.m. with Muskie and others. We then went to the White House and met in the Cabinet Room with the President, Mondale, Brzezinski, Jordan and Bob Hunter of the NSC staff. Muskie asked Roy and me to state our views on the options, in light of the potential reactions in Egypt and Israel. I made a flat prediction that we would be dealing with the Begin government for at least the rest of 1980, though Peres and Weizman had been trying to bring the government down and to force new elections. I said that any efforts that we might make to force an immediate agreement had absolutely no chance for success because Begin was not about to make the necessary concessions. U.S. pressure would probably strengthen Begin's political support. Atherton reported that Sadat was not interested in a showdown at the time; he wanted to continue the process in a deliberate way, awaiting a possible change of government in Israel. Muskie endorsed our analysis and took the position that option (a) was the only feasible approach. Carter was very unhappy; he wanted to try to force an agreement. Carter was concerned by a comment that Brzezinski had made, which was that we had to find some way to explain to the American public and the Europeans. Some one—either Mondale or Muskie—would have to give a speech explaining our position. It was clear that Muskie intended to give the speech. Muskie was very much in charge and I was very impressed with the command that the Secretary had of the situation, even though he had been in office only a month. He was quietly, but firmly, asserting his authority. He put Brzezinski back in his place on a couple of occasions when the National Security Advisor seemed to get off the track. I liked the way Muskie listened and asked the right questions; he came to sensible judgments. He was very self-confident in a very quiet and effective way with the President, which also was impressive.

This entire period was sheer torture for Carter. The hostage crisis worsened right after the deplorable Begin visit to Washington. Then came Vance's resignation over the hostage rescue mission. Muskie's selection was a brilliant choice which reestablished some

confidence in the country in our foreign policy. I think that had Carter been re-elected, Muskie would have continued as Secretary and would have shaken up the Department. He was an excellent Secretary for the brief period he was in office and had he been given a chance, I think he would have been a very successful one over a longer period. I don't think he has received much historical credit for his stewardship, but he steadied the President and the administration in a very rough period.

I and my State Department colleagues had been very troubled that in the wake of Vance's resignation, Carter had made a few gratuitous remarks about Vance in public which were not called for. That was very petty, which reflected a negative side of Carter that was not pleasant. Those of us who knew Vance to be an extraordinarily able, hard working, loyal, dedicated Secretary were upset by Carter's comments. Cy characteristically did not respond, but I think they really hurt him.

Eventually, the President made the right choice on the U.S. position on the autonomy talks. He endorsed a tactic that I had urged, which was to make clear to the Europeans that we would oppose any efforts to modify UN Resolution 242 as long as negotiations were still on-going. Any veto of an amended 242 at this time would have had grave consequences in the Arab world. Any change in the UN status quo would have derailed all of our efforts, both in the Arab world and in Israel. So keeping 242 as it was very important if any progress was to be made in the negotiations. Carter finally agreed with that position, although by this time he was completely skeptical of any progress being made on autonomy talks. He was convinced that Begin was hopeless and no agreement acceptable to us or the Egyptians would ever be developed as long as Begin was in power. On the other hand, Carter's domestic political situation, which he understood well, prevented him from confronting Begin. So grudgingly, he agreed with us to just keep matters afloat; he left the Cabinet Room after the meeting very unhappy.

I made some notes during this meeting about Carter. He looked terribly old and tired. That was of course understandable in light of the events of the previous two weeks. At one

point, we discussed the oft-postponed visit of King Hussein to Washington. The King had been invited several times; he had accepted and then at the last minute, he regretted. So by this time Carter was pretty well fed up with the King. The darker side of Carter's personality came to the fore during a “stream of consciousness” diatribe during which he characterized Hussein as a three-time back-stabber, a prostitute who took money from everybody, a worthless individual, etc. Everyone else around the table tried to make the point that Hussein remained very influential with the Palestinians; regardless of whether one liked the King, he had to be dealt with. Hussein was obviously distancing himself from the Camp David Accords, as the Jordanian and Arab politics dictated. Finally, Carter, after much muttering, agreed to allow Phil Habib, who happened to be in Amman at that moment, to probe whether His Majesty would entertain another invitation to Washington. Carter was reluctant to invite him again, fearing another last minute embarrassment if Hussein again did not show. Carter could not see the world through Hussein's eyes; he did not understand why it would be awkward for Hussein to come to Washington immediately following Begin and Sadat, under circumstances then existing. Hussein saw such a visit as just too politically dangerous. That meeting did not show Carter's best side.

Just before I left Washington to return to Tel Aviv, I had lunch with Sol Linowitz, who unburdened himself about Warren Christopher's ambivalence about remaining as Deputy Secretary—after Carter had publicly chastised Vance. Muskie wanted Christopher to remain, but Carter's comments had shaken Christopher. So he was undecided, but ultimately stayed on. At that lunch, we also discussed what Muskie might do as the Department's senior manager. We agreed that he would probably make a lot of changes if he were still Secretary after the Presidential elections. We discussed some of the personnel changes that Muskie might make.

I had barely returned after the Washington review and the Presidential decisions to move along when Sadat pulled one of his classic double maneuvers. Carter had telephoned him after our policy review and was able to convince Sadat to say publicly that he was willing to continue negotiations, even after the target date of May 26. The day after making that

statement, Sadat announced that he was so shocked by an action taken by the Israeli Knesset concerning Jerusalem that he had decided to suspend negotiations. In fact, Sadat overreacted to an erroneous press report from Israel which suggested that the Begin government had just passed a new law affirming that Jerusalem was Israel's capital. The ultimate outcome of this story became very destructive to the negotiations and other factors in the U.S.-Israel relationships.

The story went something like this. Ms. Geula Cohen, an old Begin side-kick now opposing his government, was very much opposed to the peace treaty and had voted against it in the Knesset when Begin submitted it for ratification, thereby breaking with her friend. She was always thereafter trying to find some way to sabotage the autonomy negotiations. She submitted a “private member” bill which asserted that Jerusalem, in its post 1967 boundaries, was Israel's sole and sovereign capital. That bill was totally unnecessary because in fact that claim had already been staked out in 1950. But she took this route to provoke her enemies. Both the Likud and the Labor leaders in Knesset tried to get her to withdraw her bill. She resisted. A “private member” bill has to be sent to a committee of the Knesset to be reviewed and judged. When the question of referring her bill to a committee arose, everyone had to vote in favor because no member of the Knesset, even Labor parliamentarians, could vote against considering a bill that dealt with Jerusalem without wishing to commit political suicide. Of course, everyone expected that “the fix” was on and that the bill would languish in committee. The bill was referred to the Law Committee, chaired by David Glass who belonged to the National Religious Party. He was a major “dove” and opposed the bill. He was opposed to anything that might interfere with the negotiations. So the vote to send the Cohen bill to his Committee was understood to be the way to kill it. No one expected the bill to come out of that Committee for years, if ever. Glass had in fact assured many people that this would happen. However, a distorted version of events was reported in the press, generating that strong Sadat reaction to suspend the negotiations. I suspect of course that Sadat used the Cohen bill fiasco as an excuse. At the time of this uproar, a conference of the Islamic League was being held

in Islamabad. Egypt was certainly going to be denounced there in strong terms for its participation in the Camp David process and for making peace with Israel. I therefore felt that Sadat may well have seized the Cohen bill as an excuse to suspend the negotiations, distancing himself thereby from Israel and perhaps putting Egypt in a better light at the Islamabad conference. In any case, the whole affair became a big mess.

There was considerable diplomatic activity in an effort to get the autonomy agreement negotiations re-started. There was a shake-up in the Egyptian government. Mustafa Khalil resigned as Prime Minister; Hassan Ali was appointed as Foreign Minister. The new Foreign Minister told Roy Atherton that the Egyptians would continue the negotiations if they had assurances from the Israelis that the infamous Cohen bill would not be supported by the Begin government if it ever were reported out of Committee. Sadat sent Begin a long letter covering this and other issues (e.g., Sharon's drive to build more settlements on the West Bank, actions of a repressive nature that the Israelis were taking on the West Bank in the wake of the Hebron massacre, etc.), in very polite terms—the matters that were making it difficult for the Egyptians to continue the negotiations. Sadat left it up to Begin to do what he could to improve the negotiating atmosphere.

Begin's response was essentially to point out that it was the Egyptians who had broken off the negotiations and therefore it was up to them to propose a way to re-start them. Begin took the same position in a letter to Carter. I talked to many people in and out of the Israeli government. I discussed the status of the negotiations with Shamir and Borg, but there wasn't much movement. Muskie, while in Europe, tried to get agreement from the French, the British and the Germans that they wouldn't pursue amending Resolution 242 in the Security Council, so that we would have maximum flexibility in pushing the negotiations. He did not get much satisfaction, particularly from the French, but all of the Europeans agreed to a temporary cessation of their UN initiative.

At about this time, Weizman resigned as Defense Minister. That was very sad because he had been the last strong voice in the Israeli autonomy talks team and in the Cabinet

against Begin's hard line position. But Weizman had finally become disaffected and abandoned his hope to become Begin's chosen successor one day. Begin was fed up with him for all the arguments he was putting up and Weizman was fed up with Begin. The ostensible rationale for his resignation was that the defense budget was being cut—the Israeli government was going through an economy drive. Weizman insisted that the defense budget be approved at the level he had requested; when it wasn't, he resigned. Begin didn't try to persuade him otherwise. The gap between the two had by this time become so sharp—on such issues as the settlements, the West Bank policy in general, the autonomy talks—that Weizman was not much of a factor in Cabinet discussions. I had a very nostalgic farewell meeting with him on a Friday afternoon, as he was packing his personal belongings in the office and writing his letter of resignation, an emotional attack on Begin which, of course, soon became public. The appointment of a replacement became a major issue. Sharon desperately wanted the job, but the Likud Liberals and the Democrat Party, which was a member of the coalition, were unalterably opposed to Sharon. Moshe Arens was a possibility, but Sharon was strongly opposed to that. Eventually, the issue was resolved by Begin keeping the defense portfolio for himself, following the precedent that Ben Gurion had started many years earlier. Begin stayed as Defense Minister for the remainder of that government's term, which was well over a year until the election of 1981. He would not have given Sharon the post even then if he could have avoided it because he was worried about having Sharon in that job; he didn't trust Sharon even then. However, after the 1981 election which Begin won by a whisker, Sharon threatened to pull the two or three Likud Knesset members that he controlled out of the coalition if he was not appointed as Defense Minister. That election had been almost a dead heat, forcing Begin to form a government with only a majority of one or two members in the Knesset. That made the Sharon people swing votes that Begin could not afford to lose and therefore he had to appoint him as Defense Minister.

But from May 1980 to July 1981, Begin served both as Prime Minister and Defense Minister. He spent about one day each week in Tel Aviv at the Defense Ministry. He was

supported by a very able military assistant, General Poran, who had been in that position for several years starting when Peres was Defense Minister in Rabin's cabinet. He was a moderate, serious, thoughtful individual. He kept Begin fairly well advised about on-going matters in the Defense Ministry. But it was not a very satisfactory arrangement. Begin's lack of familiarity with defense issues made it very awkward. Begin loved to play the role of Defense Minister; he enjoyed presiding at meetings of the generals; that gave him a big kick. He did make a number of mistakes as Defense Minister because the job required full time attention that Begin could not give it, even if he had the necessary background. Nevertheless, it was better to have Begin as Defense Minister than Sharon as we all learned later before and during the Lebanon war. Weizman just decided to go into “exile” at home, hoping to be recalled at some stage, like de Gaulle.

Time passed; we did not manage to get the negotiations back on track for several weeks. In the meantime, the Cohen bill did not turn out to be as simple a matter as we had hoped, as I had been assured. As often happens in Israeli politics, the unexpected tends to dominate the headlines. The best plans of mice and men go astray. After Sadat had first suspended the negotiations, citing the Jerusalem problem, the issue became a major one in the Arab world and in the world press. That forced a lot of the world's public attention on Cohen's bill. It was discussed in the Security Council. That triggered a chain of events which ultimately produced a result 180% opposite of that desired by Sadat. In fact, the Committee had to discharge the bill and bring it to the floor, where it was passed, despite the sotto voce opposition of all of the Knesset members. I had been urging by phone, by cables—that both Washington and Cairo not get embroiled publicly in the Jerusalem issue. I had hoped that Sadat would avoid it because public debate about the issue would not serve the cause of peace and certainly would derail the negotiations. Both the White House and the Department of State understood the problem, but Sadat had dramatized it, making it into a sort of Greek tragedy. No one could stop the furor. The Israeli government had no strategy for handling the debate. It had anticipated that putting it into Glass' Committee would be the end of Cohen's bill. The Labor Party dithered; it

obviously opposed the bill, but didn't want to be perceived to be on the wrong side of the issue if a vote were to be taken. It couldn't afford to be against the law while the Likud supported it. Because the bill had been introduced and because Sadat had highlighted it, the Arab block then insisted on a full debate over the Jerusalem issue in the Security Council. The Arab countries also wanted a separate and full debate on the whole Middle East-Palestinian issue. After much debate, the U.S. delegation finally decided to veto any Security Council resolution that might call for the establishment of a Palestinian state. Our international legal position on Jerusalem, which we had held historically since 1948 and had postulated more often than any can remember, was that the Jerusalem issue was a matter for the parties in the dispute, who had to resolve the question themselves. Our position had always angered the Israelis even though we had stated it many, many times. Once the Jerusalem issue was raised in the Security Council, the U.S. government had to restate its historic position. By the end of July, a Jerusalem resolution had been introduced in the Security Council and a vote had been scheduled. The Arabs had drafted the resolution carefully to reflect the traditional U.S. position. That made it very difficult for us to veto it. I sent in several messages urging that we veto the resolution in order to defend the Camp David process; I thought that nothing should pass which would undermine that process.

My position was reinforced by the White House political operatives who saw Carter's re-election campaign already in deep trouble with Jewish voters. They also argued in favor of a veto; the State Department was torn, to put it mildly. As so often happens, the suicidal instincts of Israeli domestic politics surfaced and won the day. I learned later that Carter was in the Cabinet Room on Monday morning, July 28, 1980 agonizing with Muskie and other advisors on how the U.S. would vote in the Security Council. The practical choices were a) veto or b) abstain. At that very time, David Glass folded after very effective demagoguery by Ms. Cohen. He allowed his Committee to vote whether to bring the bill to the floor of the Knesset for a first reading. He later explained to me that he thought he had enough votes (8 against vs. 6) in the Committee to favor his plan which was to hold

extensive hearings and thereby delay any action for several months. But he miscounted the votes and lost a procedural vote in the Committee by 8-7. The Labor Party members, having lost on that vote, then switched sides and voted to bring the bill to the floor. Two members that Glass had counted on—a Liberal, and a very dovish member now a leader of the Meretz Party—were not present for inexplicable reasons. They would have voted with Glass, but Glass obviously was a very inept chairman. He couldn't control his own Committee's agenda. He was under considerable pressure from the religious parties not to be perceived as “soft” on Jerusalem; that was an important factor politically for him. So on that Monday morning, a UPI ticker story was handed to Carter while he was deliberating the U.S. position; that report stated that the bill had just been sent by the Committee to the floor of Knesset. One of the participants in the Cabinet meeting told me that the ticker story hit the table with a loud thud and the debate stopped. Carter immediately saw that there was no way that the bill would not be approved by the Knesset; my arguments thereafter fell on deaf ears because its assumption was that the bill could be kept in Committee if the U.S. would veto the resolution. So Carter approved a U.S. abstention in the Security Council.

Our abstention in the Security Council gave rise to another series of events which increased the difficulties in restarting autonomy negotiations. A little later in September, Sol Linowitz achieved an extraordinary success. He persuaded Sadat to agree to a vague joint statement to the effect that negotiations would resume, that a summit would be held between them at a time and place to be agreed upon later. That statement was well received in the White House. Carter heard about it by phone from Linowitz a couple of hours before Reagan was to appear before the B'nai B'rith conference. He had the news put out publicly, slightly upstaging Reagan. That raised Linowitz' stock with the political operatives in the White House. The three days that Linowitz had spent in Jerusalem and Cairo were a tour de force. I later wrote that he had been both sympathetic, tough, and long suffering. He took the worst that Begin could dish out and then in return shook Begin up. He used background sessions with Israeli editors and American correspondents very

skillfully. He gave the Israeli negotiation team a real earful about what they were risking. Linowitz' performance in Israel was very skilled and he was ably supported by Ned Walker and Andy Marks.

I thought the matter would rock along relatively smoothly until after the U.S. elections, after which I hoped that negotiations would be restarted. But during August, U.S.-Israeli relations had sagged badly. The UN resolution, in which we abstained, not only condemned Israel for its actions in Jerusalem, but called on all countries to remove their Embassies from that city. Beyond that, it generally expressed the historical U.S. position. The fact that the U.S. allowed that resolution to be adopted was not well received in Israel to put it mildly. Across the political spectrum, the Israelis resented our position. Within a few weeks of the passage of the resolution, eleven Embassies, out of thirteen, had moved from Jerusalem to Tel Aviv. That included the Dutch who had been the first to open an Embassy in Jerusalem. The net effect of the Jerusalem controversy, which Begin had tried to use to bolster his own domestic political support, resulted in isolating Israel internationally. That was a totally unnecessary outcome. The deputies that had voted in favor of the Cohen bill then began to comment that they really had been against it all along. I noted at the time that there was never any greater accuracy to the old Kissinger adage that “Israel had no foreign policy; it only has domestic politics”.

The White House and the State Department were furious with Begin, but they could not express their frustrations publicly because of the Presidential campaign which was going badly for Carter. The Jewish vote in New York was absolutely crucial if he had any hopes of re-election. In August-September, Reagan and Carter were running neck-in-neck. The whole series of events surrounding the Jerusalem tempest convinced me that if Carter were re-elected and as long as Begin remained as Prime Minister, it would be very difficult to have a useful U.S.-Israel relationship. A summit meeting was being planned for November; if Carter had won re-election, it would have been a very difficult meeting for the Israelis because I was sure that Carter would have read the riot act to them. I also thought that if this scenario were to develop, Begin would relish standing up to American pressures

because that would have helped boost his domestic political support which he needed for the 1981 Israeli elections. In early September, I was predicting that the following ten months would be a very rough period for Israeli-U.S. relations. Of course, Carter lost to Reagan.

I wrote some notes on November 16, 1980 right after the final Carter-Begin meeting. I reflected on the beauty of Washington as a city, the mood of the city now that a transition in the White House had been ordained by the American public, the significance of the departure of such Senate stalwarts as Church, McGovern, Bayh, Stone, Javits, Ribicoff, Talmadge, Magnuson and others. I also speculated about who might be included in a Reagan administration. Shultz and Haig were the front runners for the position of Secretary of State. As it turned out, it was Haig first to be followed by Shultz eighteen months later.

My ostensible purpose for returning to Washington in mid-November was to accompany Begin for his last meeting with Carter—the tenth. First I went to New York to meet Begin upon his arrival. I sat on the dais at a black tie dinner celebrating Jabotinsky's 100th birthday. He was the political leader who competed with Weizman for the leadership of the world Zionist movement. We are now talking about the '20s and 30's when he led the “Revisionist” wing movement of the movement. It was a great event for Begin, who always described himself as an apostle of Jabotinsky and also had tried to model himself after him. Begin had written a very long speech for the occasion. He told me that it was only one of three speeches that he had ever written personally. I had only heard him previously speaking from notes. But this occasion was so important to him that he wrote out the speech in full text. It turned out to be deadly dull—no punch; it put a lot of people to sleep during the hour that it took to deliver. It was the worst speech I ever heard Begin give and I attribute that to the fact that he had written it out. There were 3,000 people at the dinner in the huge Waldorf Astoria Hotel ballroom, each paying $500 for a seat. All of us had to sit from 6:30 p.m. until 10:00 p.m.(!) listening to various speeches from Jewish leaders and Begin. Then, and only then, was dinner served. Begin—wisely as it turned out—

wanted to speak before dinner. That meant that all the other speakers had to precede him. There were dozens of people on the dais, all of whom had to be recognized and many of whom had to say something. I was sitting right next to Begin, facing the huge audience. Cameras and lights were whirring away. The only food on the table were some olives and a little bit of cantaloupe which I devoured quickly. Sometime during Begin's speech, I dropped off to sleep. The long trip, jet lag, no food finally caught up to me. I am sure that I appear in some photographs napping away right next to the principal speaker, who had characterized his remarks as the most important in his life. I don't know whether Begin noticed; at least he never mentioned it, but a lot of other people did.

After this difficult evening, we flew to Washington, where I attended the last of the Begin arrival ceremonies. I had persuaded Muskie that he should come personally to the airport to greet Begin; he normally would not have done that. I was concerned that unless the Secretary was there, the Israeli press would be writing stories about the Carter administration being so angry at the minimal support it had received in the election from the American Jewish community that it had snubbed Begin. Muskie weighed my arguments and did go to the airport; I think it was the appropriate gesture. That night, I attended a reception at Ambassador Evron's house—I think there were more press and Secret Service agents than guests—a sad affair. The next morning, we met at the White House. I went in the motorcade with the Israeli delegation because often the American Ambassador plays the role of “meeter and greeter” for such official occasions. As was the practice, I went to the hotel to meet Begin and to escort him to the White House. The other members of the American delegation went to the White House directly. As we walked past the Rose Garden through the South Lawn into the President's residential quarters, there we saw Carter grinning ear to ear, all teeth. He put on a fantastic show of good humor and friendship. He very graciously took Begin into the Oval Office for a one-on-one meeting for about forty minutes. The other members of the American and Israeli delegations sat in the Cabinet Room talking with each other. Brzezinski was very subdued; Jody Powell was very quiet, looking very sad. Linowitz and Muskie were very quiet. The Israelis seemed

nervous. Ambassador Evron was worrying about his own press problems; he was in some difficulties with some Cabinet officers over some alleged slights he was supposed to have made toward some Republicans during the campaign. He also had been unable to arrange for a meeting between Reagan and Begin on this trip. Fortunately, both Begin and Foreign Minister Shamir soon confirmed that Evron would remain as Israeli Ambassador.

Carter and Begin came to the Cabinet Room for a further meeting that lasted about twenty minutes. There were some ceremonial exchanges around the table, with reference to some of their achievements like Camp David. Muskie made some gracious comments about both Carter and Begin. The only substantive comments were actually made by Linowitz. Both Carter and Begin had mentioned that they hoped that the autonomy talks would begin again soon and be completed. Muskie suggested that a joint summary document be drafted. Both Carter and Begin reluctantly agreed, but it was actually intended to provide the remaining members of the peace team—Ned Walker et al—something to work on during the transition. In fact, we could not reach agreement on such a document. Instead, Linowitz and his staff drafted their own summary which the U.S. made public. Linowitz concluded that in fact 80% of the issues had been resolved in the autonomy negotiations; he detailed the matters that had been agreed upon. He somewhat exaggerated the degree of achievement. The percentage may have been technically correct, but all the really difficult issues remained unresolved so that the toughest work remained. He urged that the new administration make a concerted effort to conclude them.

After the White House meeting, Carter and Begin met the press on the driveway. Both made warm valedictory statements. Begin was very eloquent in expressing his admiration for the way Carter was accepting the will of the American people and what that said for the strength of democracy. Then they shook hands for the last time. Carter stood with what I thought were a couple of tears in his eyes, waving goodbye to the Israeli delegation. The Camp David hopes remained unfulfilled. The Americans went back into the West Wing and I talked to the President for about five minutes. I again noticed how visibly worn out he was. His mask had dropped off. He had handled himself with great dignity which was

even more impressive because we all knew how bitter he was. He really blamed Begin for his defeat. To this day, Carter is convinced that Begin was responsible for his loss of Jewish support, starting with the primary defeat in New York by Ted Kennedy and then the election. During our conversation he was both bitter and calm. He regretted that all of his peace making efforts—Camp David and its aftermath, non-proliferation, Panama Canal—had brought him nothing but political grief. He was convinced that he had been beaten because he had done the right thing. He was very kind in his comments about my work and contributions. I was pleased that I had been able to make some contribution to the Israeli-Egyptian peace treaty, which was an enormous achievement.

He also told me that during the private meeting he had been very blunt with Begin. He hadn't seen any reason to hold back. He described for Begin clearly the disastrous consequences if the Knesset were to adopt any legislation annexing the Golan Heights, because it would destroy Resolution 242 and the peace process (NOTE: that is exactly what Begin did a year later in 1981.) Carter said that Begin had listened carefully, but didn't respond. Carter said that he had also gotten Begin's agreement not to send any military equipment to Iran until our hostages had been safely returned; and even then, he wanted the Israelis to consult with us before any shipment occurred. (NOTE: that issue was key to the Iran-gate crisis three years later.) As usual, Lebanon did not arise during the meeting between the two principals. Carter never liked to take on more issues than he had to. Even though Lebanon should have been discussed, Carter decided that it would not have served any useful purpose. At the end of my session with the President, I was impressed with his show of dignity throughout what must have been a very trying experience.

Linowitz agreed with my assessment that Carter blamed Begin for not having quietly passed the word to the American Jewish community that Carter was a true friend of Israel, which he indeed was. I noted at the time that I thought that Begin was genuinely sympathetic towards Carter during the campaign. I believed that the poor perception that the American Jewish community had of Carter came at the instigation of others in

Israel—not Begin. Later, however, I learned from conversation with some of Begin's close advisors that he had indeed concluded—long before the election—that Carter had outlived his usefulness. He secretly hoped for a Reagan victory because he viewed him as being more understanding and sympathetic of Israel. Begin undoubtedly felt that he and Carter had had too many disagreements by 1980. Whether Begin's personal views were communicated to the American Jewish community and therefore influenced the outcome, I don't know. But it was clear that that community in 1980 had come to the conclusion that although Carter had accomplished much at Camp David, he had expressed some very negative views about Israel subsequently and therefore was probably not worth their trust. There is no doubt that the Jewish vote swung heavily toward the Republicans, which was certainly a factor in a moderately close election.

I should note one other interesting aspect of that last Begin-Carter meeting. Up to the day before they met, Carter was toying with the idea of a summit meeting with Sadat and Begin. He had hoped thereby to conclude the autonomy negotiations and cap his foreign policy stewardship with a singular achievement. He tried to ignore that as a “lame duck” he had no leverage over the other two to persuade them to make any concessions. Muskie had somewhere gotten the notion that Begin wanted a summit and in order to achieve that, might be willing to make some major concessions to make a successful meeting.

Before returning to Tel Aviv, I spent considerable time discussing Lebanon with Roy Atherton, our Ambassador to Egypt, Nick Veliotes, our Ambassador to Jordan, Talcott Seelye, our Ambassador to Syria and John Gunther Dean, our Ambassador to Lebanon. It was a sort of small Chiefs of Mission conference at the end of the Carter administration. We were trying to develop recommendations for the new administration. We, as usual, disagreed sharply about Lebanon, especially Dean and me. Warren Christopher had attended one of the meetings that Muskie had held with the six of us. Dean and Seelye argued that the PLO was the essential interlocutor for the administration. They felt that an American administration had to deal with that group if it were to prevent a disaster. Christopher noted sarcastically that if he had just come from Mars, he would have

assumed that Carter had been firmly opposed to negotiations involving the Palestinians and that Reagan had been saying that the negotiations with the PLO should be started! That was another indicator of Carter's frustrations of not being able to deal with the PLO; he felt that his hands were tied by domestic political considerations and by precedent and prior commitments. We all agreed that nothing further could be done about negotiations until after the Israeli elections which were to be held in June, 1981. We believed that if Peres won, the chances of bringing the negotiations to a successful conclusion would be more promising. But in the meantime, there was nothing to do, but hope that no new major barrier would arise and try to educate the new administration.

We did not agree with Linowitz' argument that negotiations could be resumed immediately in January and could be brought to a successful conclusion soon thereafter. We saw that Begin was too firmly planted and could not or would not move during a pre-election period. John Dean was concerned that a hiatus of a year might bring greater instability in Lebanon that he thought might only be prevented by contacts with the PLO. Seelye tended to support that thesis, although he had to admit that the Syrians were not in any position to cause much mischief for the next year. Furthermore, he also thought that the PLO was in such disarray that perhaps the U.S. position might not be too damaging to overall stability in the region. We five Ambassadors had many disagreements about strategy and tactics. Seelye particularly pushed relentlessly the thesis that until the U.S. brought the PLO into the negotiations, there would be no way to achieve a comprehensive settlement. He voiced concern that the Saudis, under PLO blackmail, might return to an oil embargo. John West, our Ambassador to Saudi Arabia, argued that the Saudis were at that moment at the point of using the oil weapon because they were so frustrated about U.S. reluctance to sell them advanced fighter aircraft and other issues. He also argued in favor of a U.S. dialogue with the PLO partly to keep the Saudis from doing anything rash. I disagreed with that position as well as Dean's views of Lebanon. He and I argued frequently and vehemently about the state of that country, all during our tenures as Ambassadors. Dean detested Bashir Gemayel and he tried to ignore the Phalange as much as possible. He

always tried to find ways to force the Israelis to withdraw their support from Gemayel and to clamp down on Major Haddad in the south on the assumption that would have some undefinable positive impact in Beirut. We never managed to agree about very much.

At this point in my career, I didn't have any idea about my future. I assumed that I would be replaced in Israel, as customarily happens with a change in administrations. A number of people asked me about my wishes and I told all of them that I would like to stay on in Israel for at least a couple of years more. I thought that the Camp David process was only half completed and I wanted to see what further progress we could make before leaving. There was no other position that I was really interested in. I had decided that I would retire if my appointment as Ambassador to Israel were terminated. In fact, I did retire from the Foreign Service in January, 1981 when, just having turned fifty with more than twenty-five years of service, I became eligible. But I remained Ambassador as a Presidential appointee for the rest of my tenure in Israel to 1985.

In fact, Haig decided—very wisely, I thought—to keep on all the professional Ambassadors to Middle East countries. That enabled the new administration to maintain some continuity in policy in that region. As it turned out, I stayed the longest, all the way through the first term of the Reagan administration. That Haig decision was unusual, but he was a professional himself and understood the benefits of maintaining continuity. I think he has been somewhat maligned as Secretary of State; he was a better Secretary than he has been credited.

Date: July 25, 1991 Subject: Post-Carter Period Interviewer: Peter Jessup

Q: We have now reached the end of the Carter Administration. Ambassadors Strauss and Linowitz had worked on the autonomy negotiations, which had been agreed to at Camp David. What happened next?

LEWIS: At that stage of the game, it was Ambassador Linowitz' view that we had managed to get resolved about eighty percent of the outstanding issues between the Egyptians and

the Israelis. He strongly urged the new administration—President Reagan and Secretary Haig—to become immediately involved in the negotiations and to appoint a new U.S. negotiator so that the momentum leading to an agreement would not be lost. He thought that the arrangements could be completed in a relatively short time. As a matter of fact, Linowitz wrote a long report for Carter to pass to Reagan in which he went into great detail on the state of the key issues, what we had done to mediate them and the road-blocks still facing the negotiators. That report was passed to the Reagan team, but for a variety of reasons it was not placed high on the agenda by the new team. More than six months had expired before the new administration turned to the Camp David follow-on process; they tried to resuscitate it, but by that time too much water had gone over the dam and the process lay fallow for many months. (Though what follows gets ahead of the chronology, it's relevant to the fate of the autonomy negotiations.)

In 1984, not too many months before I left Israel, I was asked by the “Dayan Center for Near East and African Studies” at Tel Aviv University to participate in a day-long symposium on the aftermath of the peace treaty with Egypt. I was asked to give a lecture on why the autonomy negotiations had failed. I did that, resulting in some unintended political flack. Right after my lecture, I was due to race from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem to participate in a diplomatic ceremony—by this time, I had become the Dean of the Diplomatic Corps. The Tel Aviv University conference took place on Columbus Day—the “Day of the Americas” as it is called in Latin America. Israel's President Chaim Herzog was holding his traditional reception at Beit Hanassi, his official residence in Jerusalem, for all Western Hemisphere Ambassadors, including the Canadian and myself. Since I was the Dean, it was particularly important that I be present. So I rushed through the last part of my speech so that I could leave for Jerusalem as quickly as possible. I unfortunately arrived at the Herzog residence about one-half hour late, to be met by a very steely gaze from the President as I tried to creep into my rostrum seat. He didn't of course know why I was late and although I tried to explain afterwards, he did not take it at all well. We were good friends and he finally got over my faux pas, but he always had been someone who

stressed form and formality. It was an unfortunate result of my lecture. But not the most unfortunate.

As I was rushing through the last part of my lecture on why the autonomy negotiations had failed, I was trying to make a dramatic point, as many speakers will do, particularly if they are speaking extemporaneously, by trying to find a catchy phrase. I was trying to end my discussion with some comments about the Reagan initiative of September 1, 1982 which was the last gasp in the process. I said: “The Reagan initiative was a genuine effort to re-create momentum, to re-launch the Camp David Agreement with some embellishments, but fundamentally on the same terms. Unfortunately, the timing was, in my judgment, abysmal; the tactics of its presentation, worse; and the outcome, so far, nil”. Then I finished the rest of the speech. There was an AP journalist in the audience who filed a story that night which was headlined: “American Ambassador Attacks Reagan”. This came out one week before the November, 1984 election. I had never even thought about that possible political connection! Also, as I was planning to retire the next spring after 8 years, I had become more casual about my public statements—though I always made clear on such occasions that my remarks were purely personal, non-official, “analytical” views. The New York Times correspondent—Tom Friedman—who was a friend of mine and is now widely known to the public and in journalistic circles, had not covered my speech. His editor telephoned him at 2 a.m. from New York and asked him what the story of my attacking Reagan was all about. The editor wanted to know where Friedman's story on this issue was. Tom, of course, didn't know anything about it. So the editor explained that I had been giving a lecture and AP had carried a story about it. So Friedman dashed around and filed a story, based on his interviews with a couple of people who had been there. The next day, I received a phone call from the White House which was, to say the least, chilly. I quickly sent in a cable with the full text of the transcript, which we made from a recording that had been made of my lecture. When the phrase was seen in its full context, it clearly was not quite what it sounded like on the AP ticker. Nevertheless, I got word from Secretary Shultz' office that my words had created a stir and that there was

some thought in the White House that my tour of duty might be shortened from the June, 1985 target date which I had planned on. In addition to cabling in the transcript, I explained the circumstances and I also wrote a letter to President Reagan, which I sent to Shultz, with a request to the Secretary that if he thought it was necessary or useful that my letter be passed to the President with an explanation of the circumstances. Shultz did pass the letter to the President. Later, I got a gracious letter in reply from the President telling me not to worry about the episode. But there were several days after my lecture that could have been devoted to packing! That is another side of the diplomatic business. You should never forget that anything you say can end up on the front pages somewhere!

I mentioned earlier that, after his re-election defeat, Carter received Begin one last time in the White House. I should add one foot-note to the history of the 1980 campaign. The Israeli Minister of Defense, Ezer Weizman, who was a great admirer of Jimmy Carter because of the latter's role in Camp David and because he liked Carter whom he felt had been a good advocate for Israel and peace, happened to have been in the United States in October, 1980, the last month of the presidential election campaign. Weizman went to see Carter and was asked by the President to join him on one of his election trips. This got a lot of publicity in Israel. Begin was quite upset by this alleged Weizman intervention in the American democratic process, as he put it. The Israeli view in general of Carter at this point was very ambiguous; he had been an extraordinary achiever at Camp David, but the last two years of his administration had been filled with enough elements of irritation between Carter and Begin, particularly on the settlements issue, that a sour taste had been left in the mouths of some Israelis. And we now know from good Israeli sources that Begin himself strongly hoped for a Reagan victory. In the Spring of 1980, during the primary campaign, just as New Yorkers were about to vote and sew up for Carter the nomination, a resolution on Israeli settlements, which intra alia called for the removal of all Jewish “settlements” in East Jerusalem, was tabled in the UN Security Council. Unfortunately, the State Department and our UN Representative voted in a fashion which allowed it to pass—though Carter had given instructions to get all references to Jerusalem

removed, or else cast our veto. There had been a communications breakdown between Carter and Vance and the UN Mission. The next day Carter tried to have the vote changed when he realized what had happened, but that cannot be done a day after a vote. The issue is one that is very sensitive in Israel, and for American Jews. Vance took the blame for the mistake, but then supported the U.S. vote when he testified later in Congress. Carter's day-late efforts to change our vote gave a public perception of vacillation; all these events gave Carter's Jewish supporters in New York considerable pause. Senator Kennedy, who was running against Carter, exploited the mix-up, won the New York primary, and thereby forced the President to battle through several more primaries in order to win the nomination. Had he won New York, the later primaries would not have been significant. Kennedy had used the UN vote to point out Carter's allegedly negative view towards Israel effectively and was able to beat Carter in New York. Carter never forgot that episode; in fact, his advisers ultimately blamed the New York Jews and Israel for his defeat, because both the President and his staff felt that had he won New York, then he would have had more time to prepare for and use his financial resources for the campaign against Reagan instead of having attention focused on more primaries. It also gave him the image of being a divisive figure in his own party.

Q: Who was the U.S. representative at the UN who cast the vote?

LEWIS: It was Don McHenry, but he was not really responsible. The failure was one of communications between the New York Mission and Vance and the White House. The resolution had been under negotiation for several days. It referred to Jerusalem as “occupied Arab territory”. Carter had apparently given instructions that we would veto the resolution unless all references to Jerusalem were deleted. Somehow that instruction did not get relayed accurately to the Mission and in the final language negotiations, we accepted a phrase that did contain a Jerusalem formulation. That of course raised the hackles of the Israelis. Vance had authorized the vote. When Carter found out about it and with the Israeli eruption, he felt that his instructions had not been followed properly and he instructed the State Department to change the U.S. vote. Vance was called to testify

the following week before a Congressional Committee and, although a loyal soldier, he essentially left the impression that he still thought that the language of the resolution was correct. Incidentally, this was one of the last events of Secretary Vance's tenure before the failed Iran rescue operation took place which led to his resignation. The UN incident undoubtedly helped to put Vance in a frame of mind that led to his resignation over the Iran rescue mission.

Begin and Carter met in Washington on November 13, 1980—right after the elections. It was a very bitter-sweet meeting—polite and friendly on the surface, but Carter was seething on the inside. He still believed that Begin had gone back on his word on the settlements issue after Camp David and that he had been intransigent on many other issues as well. That was in addition to Carter's view that the UN resolution affair and Israel had somehow led to his defeat. So there were tension, but it was an extraordinarily graceful meeting because Carter put on a good front and behaved impeccably despite his private bitter views.

The new administration would have been expected to change Ambassadors in Tel Aviv, even though I was a career officer. I had always assumed that if Carter were defeated, I would be replaced. So after the election, I began to make plans to leave. It would have been a very sad time to leave because I felt that although there was still a lot of work ahead, there was a reasonable possibility of finishing the Camp David process and carry out the West Bank autonomy arrangements. I was so caught up and was so committed to the peace process that I hated to think about leaving at that moment. At some stage of the game, I wrote the customary letter of resignation which is submitted by every Ambassador to a new President. Those letters are usually written after a general request is sent from the State Department to all chiefs of mission. The President then has a free hand to accept or reject the letters. I tried to convey in my letter the feeling that if the new administration wished to have me continue, I would be delighted to do so. I also tried to explain why I felt that way. Only in late January did it became clear that would happen. So the period between November and January was suspenseful; I continued to conduct business, but

I was far removed from Washington where the new administration was putting its team together. I knew some of the important figures in the new administration. Ambassador Robert Neumann, now with the Center for Strategic International Studies, was close to Dick Allen, who was to become the National Security Advisor, and to others in the new team, was asked to head the State Department's Transition Team. He had been our Ambassador in Afghanistan and I had been his deputy there for three years. I thought that might be helpful. As it turned out, he did not head the Transition Team very long because Haig, when he was named Secretary of State, had a clash with Neumann and disbanded the Transition Team. So Neumann's influence was not very great.

Q: Did you know or hear of any people who were anxious to become U.S. Ambassador to Israel?

LEWIS: As a matter of fact, I did hear of some. Whenever the Tel Aviv job becomes vacant, there are quite a few candidates, mostly self-anointed. I don't remember who the candidates to replace me were, but I remember that a couple of Jewish Congressmen were interested in the job. But as soon as Haig was well ensconced in the Department, and that could have been even in December, 1980, but certainly before the middle of January, 1981, I got the word informally that Haig had concluded that he would keep in place several career ambassadors in the Middle East including me. It so happened that a pretty good team of professionals was then in place in the area and the Secretary decided to keep it all intact. He nominated Nick Veliotes as the Assistant Secretary for the Near East. Nick and I had started out in Italy together in 1954 and he was one of my oldest friends in the Foreign Service. So I felt very comfortable with Haig's decisions and I thought that a good Middle East team had been put together.

Henry Kissinger was one of the visitors to Israel during this period between the President's election and assumption of office. He arrived in Israel with his wife Nancy on January 3. 1981. The Israelis assumed that this was a sort of reconnaissance visit for Reagan. I doubt whether the President-elect viewed it in that light, since Kissinger was hardly ever

consulted by him. But Kissinger was close to Al Haig who had been his deputy at the NSC a few years earlier. He may well have visited to take the Israelis' temperature on behalf of Haig and Reagan. I took him around to some interesting meetings. I had worked for Kissinger when he was the Secretary and I was the Deputy Director of the Policy Planning staff. He had mellowed slightly since that time, but not enormously.

I thought that Haig's decision to keep the Middle East team in place was a very good one. It made a lot of sense. Unfortunately though, the new administration decided not to take up Camp David as one of its major foreign policy threads. That is understandable; very few administrations are enthusiastic about the achievements of their predecessors. Even the phrase “Camp David” was rarely used by the new administration. There were other concerns that were much more important which explain why Reagan and Haig shied away from getting back into the negotiating process at an early date. In the first place, the Begin government was at that time in a sort of low ebb. Begin himself did not appear to be very energetic. Relations between the Israeli and the Egyptians had gotten quite frosty; there had been a prolonged period without further negotiating meetings on the autonomy issues. Carter had left the White House and the Israelis' priority turned to getting on good terms with the new administration and to solidify their position in Washington before re-entering the negotiations with Egypt. The Israelis therefore were not too interested in moving very fast. Shamir, who was then the Foreign Minister—he succeeded Dayan in 1979—went to Washington and met with both Reagan and Haig. This was during the week of February 20, 1981. Later on, Haig visited the area to become better re-acquainted with the region. During Shamir's visit, he evidently gave a pretty clear message that the Israelis were not in any hurry to resume the autonomy negotiations. In April, Haig came to the Middle East, starting in Cairo and then he came to Jerusalem. While in Cairo, I understood that he sounded out Sadat about re-starting the autonomy negotiations. Sadat apparently gave the idea a very cool reception.

By the time of Haig's visit, it was only one year before final Israeli withdrawal from Sinai was scheduled, according to the peace treaty. That was Sadat's preoccupation. He wanted

to make sure that nothing interfered with that withdrawal. When Haig subsequently met with Begin, he sensed the same lack of priority for the autonomy talks. Moreover, tensions were building up on the northern border with Palestinian forays from Lebanon into Israel. On March 7, there was a very dramatic incursion; two Palestinians using motorized hang-gliders crossed over the Lebanon-Israel border in an effort to attack Jewish communities. Both were captured, but it was a dramatic illustration of Palestinian efforts to penetrate the border. The atmosphere in the North was getting increasingly tense, given the mixture of Lebanese Christians, Israelis and Palestinians occupying a small geographical area, along with the UN peacekeepers of UNIFIL. There were a lot of discussions, as we later learned, between the Maronite Christians militia leaders and the Israelis behind the scenes. These ultimately led to a de facto alliance that led to a war the following year. During the first half of 1981, the Lebanese Christians were provoking both the Syrians and their Muslim countrymen; they were expanding their territorial jurisdiction right under the noses of the Syrians who even then were deployed in eastern Lebanon. This situation was of far greater concern to Israel than the peace process, which had sunk to a pretty low ebb. By the time Haig left Jerusalem that April, it was clear to him that there wasn't going to be any early opportunity to re-start the negotiations and that neither the Israelis nor the Egyptians were eager for the prospect. The Israeli lack of interest was only reinforced by the rising tensions on the Lebanon border, which preoccupied them and us for several months.

During Haig's visit, on April 5 he met for the first time with the whole Israeli Cabinet. First Haig and I met with Begin in his small private office, which was standard practice. In the meantime, the Cabinet was assembling in a conference room next door. This room is identical to the Cabinet room which is right above it. That meeting was fascinating; Haig gave the whole Israeli Cabinet the philosophy of the new Reagan administration. The Secretary was very sympathetic to Israel; he had greatly admired its military forces and had many Israeli friends from his previous government services. So he was regarded very sympathetically in Israel. Moreover, the new administration had begun with a view of the Middle East quite different from Carter. It saw the region almost exclusively through Cold

War lenses. So while concerned about the Israeli-Arab problem, it viewed that situation as essentially a side show; Israel was our ally while many Arab countries were allied with the Soviets. Carter had addressed the conflict as a sui generis problem which was only in small part influenced by the USSR-US competition. Certainly, in the early part of the Reagan administration, the President and the Secretary and others viewed the Middle East through an entirely different set of prisms. Syria was clearly seen as a Soviet ally or satellite. That influenced U.S. views on Lebanon and the Syrian role in that country and led Haig to view the Lebanese situation in the same way that Begin did. They both saw bad Syria beating up on the poor downtrodden Maronite Christians, with the Soviet Union in the background trying to humiliate Israel, a U.S. ally. Haig, during his visit, said publicly in a press conference that a strong Israel could play a strong role against the threat of the Soviet Union and its many surrogates. That was music to Begin's ears; he saw the Reagan administration as the kind of U.S. administration that Israel had been seeking for a long time. It did not regard Israel just as a bother or a ward or a client, but it viewed Israel as a genuine ally against the Soviet threat. Begin saw the Soviet threat in the same way.

Haig also said publicly on that visit something about Lebanon which clearly put the U.S. and Israel in the same corner along with the Maronite Christians. Only a few days before his comment was made, some Christian militia forces were trying to build a road from Zahlah in central Lebanon to other Maronite areas, which would have encircled some Syrian forces. Syria reacted rather strongly against this plan; that was the beginning of escalating encounters between the Maronite Christians and the Syrians which took place over the next several months. These conflicts increasingly sucked in the U.S. administration as a mediator; it also deeply engaged the U.S. with the Israelis and the Lebanese Christians. Haig said, while in Jerusalem, that the U.S. viewed as unacceptable by any international standards the brutality used by the Syrians on the Maronites enclaves. In his private meetings, Haig was even stronger in agreeing with the Israelis about the Syrian threat. Haig had visited the region to obtain first hand information on the status of the autonomy negotiations and to establish relationships with the governments of the

area. At the same time, the administration had decided and so announced a few days later, on April 21, to submit to Congress for approval an arms sales package to Saudi Arabia, which included five AWACs and some auxiliary fuel tanks for F-15s which had been sold a few years earlier—in contradiction to the assurances provided to Israel at the time of the original sale that fuel tanks would not be sold. The fuel tanks gave the F-15s a much greater range. The decision to proceed with this large sale to the Saudis had been made during the Carter administration; after the election, members of the Carter administration mentioned to their successors that the arms sales package would be difficult to get through Congress because of Israel's opposition and volunteered to send it then to Congress and take the onus, allowing the new administration to start with a clean slate. It was a rather gracious thing to do under the circumstances. But the Reagan team declined the offer and said they would look at it after it had taken office. When the new administration did take office, it found that a commitment to submit the sales package to Congress had been made to Saudis. The new team felt that its relationships to Israel were good enough that the Saudi package would be approved without too much opposition and therefore decided to proceed with the Congressional process. So Haig spent part of his time in Jerusalem briefing Begin on the administration's plans, pointing out its importance, the reasons why the new administration wished to proceed and why Israel should not object too strongly. The Israelis were not convinced, and the fight over that sales package went on for months in Congress, taking away a lot of the credit that the new administration thought it had picked up with Israel and its American supporters. It also cost the administration a lot of political chips to obtain approval of the sale. It was the first dark cloud on the Reagan administration-Israel relationships.

Q: Was the AWAC that much of a threat to Israel if they were in the hands of the Saudis?

LEWIS: You don't have to assume that the Saudis can use the weapon system themselves against Israel to stir up their fears. I should note that throughout my tour of duty in Israel, the issue of arms sales to Saudi Arabia arose periodically. Many were significant-F-15s, AWACs, and others. The arguments would always evolve in an almost set pattern; we

would try to convince the Israelis that the Saudis could not conceivably be a threat; the Israelis would acknowledge that they didn't fear the Saudi government, but that once this highly effective modern technology was in the hands of any country like Saudi Arabia, there was no certainty that the equipment would not be operated by somebody like the Syrians. The Israelis would always produce “evidence” that would prove that if an Arab state-Israeli war were to break out, a benign Arab country might well be found in the anti-Israeli coalition or one might even transfer forces to the Arab combatant. We could never convince the Israeli that the arms bought by Saudi were totally non-threatening; they were debates within the Israeli military establishment about the issue and they didn't take the threat as seriously as they made it out to be when debating the matter with the Embassy or Congressmen or the President. But the military did have a concern, particularly about the most advanced U.S. military equipment falling in the hands of any Arab government. They would have preferred, interestingly enough, to see the best Soviet equipment in Arab hands because they always took the view that they had American equipment and therefore did not want potential Arab adversaries to have the same equipment, because that permitted the Arabs to train on it and to learn its capabilities as well as its limitations. The Israeli military felt that its equipment would be better countered by other American equipment than by Soviet arms which they felt was inferior. So the Israelis fought the AWACs deal, but were ultimately beaten on it with a major effort by the administration, unnecessary in some ways.

Let's return to Lebanon, where matters were heating up, especially in the center of the country between the Christian and the Syrians. On April 28, 1981, the Israelis shot down two Syrian helicopters in the Bekaa Valley; the helicopters were thought to be attacking the Christian militia in the area. This decision was a very important event in the modern history of the area. It was a violation of a tacit “red line” agreement between Syria and Israel. In 1975, during the Ford administration, when Syrian forces first moved into Lebanon—ironically, initially at the request of the Christians then in bitter conflict with the PLO—the Israelis became very concerned about that development. Henry

Kissinger mediated a secret understanding, that was never in writing, called “the red line” agreement. It essentially drew an imaginary line in southern Lebanon which would never be crossed by Syrian forces, thereby leaving a buffer zone abutting the Israeli border free of Syrian forces. As long as the Syrians did not cross the line, the understanding was that Israel would not confront Syrian forces in Lebanon. There were some other provisions in the understanding; one was that Israeli over-flights for observation purposes would not be interfered with by the Syrians. That permitted the Israelis to make aerial observations of events taking place in Lebanon. The agreement also included an understanding that the Syrians would not move surface-to-surface missiles into Lebanon because they threatened Israeli over-flights. Finally, the Israelis agreed not to attack any Syrian planes over Lebanon.

The shooting down of the two helicopters was certainly interpreted in Damascus and in knowledgeable circles in Israel as having been a violation of the “red line” agreement. Begin justified the action by saying that Israel had never agreed to let the Syrians take over Lebanon and annihilate the Christians. He had always viewed the Lebanon from a very acutely Christian angle; he identified the Maronite Christians as another small minority in the Middle East which was surrounded by Arabs with their existence at risk. He saw a natural affinity between the Christians and the Israel; both were in isolated positions. He was also very impressed with Camille Chamoun, whom he met secretly. He had also met Camille's sons and the Gemayel brothers—Bashir and Amin—all secretly when they were brought to Israel for meetings with Israeli leaders. Camille Chamoun had made a great impression on Begin as a great patriarch, a man of great strength and dedication to his people; they were of the same generation. Begin also became very fond of Camille's son, Bashir. When Begin authorized the shooting down of the helicopters he must have known about the “red line” agreement. He had been both Prime Minister and Defense Minister in the last half of 1980 and the first half of 1981. Someone must have briefed him on the agreement, but he did not give it the importance that the Labor Party certainly would have, since it had been in power when the agreement was negotiated. Begin's

action resulted in the Syrian reacting by also breaking the agreement; they moved surface-to-air missiles into the Bekaa Valley. That was the beginning of the crisis escalation. Over the period May-June 1981, we spent an enormous amount of diplomatic energy trying to avoid a Syrian-Israeli war.

Once the missiles were in place, Begin started to call me in periodically to give me stern warning that unless the missiles were removed, the Israelis would destroy them. He hoped of course that we would persuade Assad through diplomatic means to pull them back. They did threaten Israel's ability to monitor what was going on in Lebanon and therefore were viewed very seriously in Jerusalem. Begin was also making public statements, giving threatening signals through the media. On May 4, I delivered a letter from Reagan to Begin in which the President asked Israel to hold off any military action against the missiles, in order to give the U.S. time to make an effort to reduce tensions through diplomatic efforts.

The following day, Reagan made a very shrewd move by announcing the appointment of Philip Habib as his special emissary for the region. Habib was to find a way to mediate the Israel-Syria dispute in order to avoid a war. Begin agreed in a reply to the President to let some time pass to allow diplomacy to have a chance. (He was not anxious to get into war with Syria.) Habib began to shuttle in the area, traveling back and forth between Damascus and Jerusalem. Begin first met Habib on May 11, when the latter came to Israel after having visited Syria where apparently he delivered a Reagan letter to Assad. Before that meeting, Begin had said to the Knesset that twelve days earlier, on April 30, the Israeli air Force had been ready to attack the battery of SAM-6 missiles that were poised on the Beirut-Damascus highway, but that bad weather had aborted the mission. That sent a strong signal to the Syrians.

Begin was a very interesting figure in this period. Not long after the beginning of the year, the Cabinet began to fall apart. There were some scandals; there was a lot of internal back-biting among his coalition; and Begin's popularity was sagging. He became so frustrated, especially by the internecine warfare within the Likud Party ranks which

generated petty squabbles that everyone wanted Begin to referee, that he went into one of his periodic states of depression. He had been subject to a manic depressive syndrome for many years. During the down phases he became almost passive. He would come to the office and go through the motions, but there was no energy, he didn't pay attention to details as he usually did and became almost another person. We are now in late February and he was entering into one of these episodes. At the same time, the Cabinet was coming unraveled to such an extent that an election was called for the end of June. In late February, 1981, there was a poll that had the Labor alignment 20 percent ahead of the Likud, which was an unprecedented margin. Labor therefore was riding high, after having been out of government since 1977. It was very confident, while the Likud was disorganized and depressed about their election prospects. Begin ignored the situation; gave no leadership; showed no interest in the forthcoming election. The campaign was developed without his participation. He was depressed and distant. One got the impression that having almost finished his first term and having achieved peace with Egypt, he didn't really care about anything else. He came back to life temporarily to worry about the Lebanese Christians, but essentially Begin was often rather detached from events in this period of time.

Begin met Habib at the Defense Ministry in Tel Aviv. Their relationships developed in a fascinating way. Phil Habib was quite an extraordinary diplomat—very ebullient, street-smart, tough, having acquired many traits from a Lebanese-Jewish community in New York where he grew up. He handled Begin with consummate skill, deferring to him properly, while at the same time engaging him intellectually in a very effective way. He also exhibited the necessary warmth and empathy towards Israel that is required if you are going to be successful with the Israelis. For several weeks, Habib played the role of providing an excuse for Begin not to bomb the missile sites. It is clear in retrospect that, while he was initially very aggressive on the issue of the missiles, Begin was under strong restraints from his military and others in the Cabinet and perhaps even from his “second thoughts”. It appears that a conclusion may have been reached that this was not a war that

Israel need to be engaged in, but after having made such a public commitment to remove the missiles, it was very tough not to bomb them. Begin clutched Habib like a lifeline since he provided the excuse not to proceed with the threats. We came to understand this very quickly and Habib played his role very well. He went back and forth between Damascus and Jerusalem; he wasn't moving the subject forward very much, but he kept up the dialogue.

In May, 1981, the Histadrut, the large Israeli labor federation, had its election. Traditionally, Histadrut membership had been about two-thirds of the population and therefore its elections were sort of a preview of the general elections. All the predictions, based on the polls, were that the Labor Party which controlled the Histadrut, would just destroy the minority Likud representation. But it didn't happen; the Likud held its own—didn't make any gains, but didn't weaken either. Somehow, when Begin saw those election returns, he was revived as if a spark of electricity had gone through his political body. Within a day or two, he had snapped out of the depression and he came out fighting. From then on until the end of June, he campaigned with extraordinary effectiveness both in the streets and later on TV. He had almost superhuman energy and was in a mood to brawl; he went after Peres hammer and tongs. The 1981 election turned out to be the dirtiest in Israel's history. It was the first election in which the Sephardic vote became a major, if not predominant, factor. The Moroccans and the other Sephardic voters, who had been members of the Likud for a long time, started going after Peres, the Labor candidate, at public rallies with tomatoes, insults and other disruptions—very nasty. It became so violent that the Labor Party, which was by then essentially a middle and upper class Party despite its name, was so taken aback that it didn't know how to react to these tactics. Begin was not ostensibly encouraging these tactics, but his inflammatory oratory—he was a great speaker—egged his partisans on. By the end of May and early June, the polls had changed and the Likud was closing the gap rapidly. Just at that point, on June 6, the Israeli Air Force attacked and destroyed the nuclear reactor just outside of Baghdad. When that raid became public, it was another shot in the arm to Begin's campaign. He pulled ahead of Peres; during the

last couple of weeks of the campaign, they were neck-and-neck right down to the wire. By the beginning of the last week, a sympathy backlash had developed for Peres resulting from the nasty campaigning and Labor pulled ahead again in the polls. The election was held on a Monday; Saturday night, Labor held its final rally in Tel Aviv in front of City Hall at the Kings of Israel square and at that time, the polls were showing Labor ahead by a couple of percentage points.

Then an odd event took place. There are indeed events that change the course of history and this was one of them. As of that Saturday night, the polls were indicating a Labor Party victory two days later. The final rally was huge; as is customary, there is a “warm-up” period of approximately an hour before the main speakers show up with singers and other entertainers keeping the crowd in a good mood. The Labor Party campaign managers had hired a well-known nightclub entertainer by the name of Dudu Topaz to tell some jokes. During his act, he made a crack, which, although hard to translate, used the Hebrew word “chacherim”, which in a rough translation refers to low-life, “neer do wells”, “bums”. Topaz said something like: “Well I am glad that there aren't any of those “chacherims” here tonight. We all know where they are”. He was of course referring to the Sephardic mobs that had been attacking Peres. Begin was driving from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem that night, after the end of the Sabbath, to be present at the normal Sunday morning Cabinet meeting. He heard the Topaz remark on the radio; since he was such a brilliant political tactician, he immediately saw an opening. As soon as he arrived in Jerusalem, he gave a radio interview which was repeated several times over the next twenty-four hours. The essence of his remarks was to remind his Sephardic followers how the Labor Party regarded them; it had called them “bums” openly. This one remark, according to the polls, resulted in a change of four seats in the Knesset—predicted to be Labor seats, but became Likud—between Saturday night and Monday morning. By the time all the votes were counted, Likud had one more seat in the Knesset than Labor, which gave Begin the opportunity to form the coalition. That is how Arik Sharon became Defense Minister. Begin had kept him out of the Defense Ministry after Weizman's resignation by

keeping that portfolio for himself because he did not trust Sharon's political judgment—for good reasons. Arik was pressing all the time to become Defense Minister in light of his distinguished military career. The Likud had won by only one vote; Arik controlled three Likud votes—his own and two others. He threatened Begin that if he did not become Defense Minister, he and his two friends would “take a walk” and make the Likud a minority party. That forced Begin to give Sharon the Defense Ministry. Had Topaz not made that crack, Sharon would not have become Defense Minister; Begin would not have been Prime Minister; there would not have been a Lebanon War; there would have been no Sabra and Shatila massacre; and the whole course of the next five or ten years would have been different. Without these events, more peace after Camp David could have been a real prospect; the autonomy negotiations would have been renewed—had the Lebanon war not eliminated all possibility—and so many other hopes might have been achieved.

Some have argued that the air strike on the Iraqi nuclear reactor guaranteed Begin's re-election, but when I carefully reviewed the polling data for this period, it becomes eminently clear that the reactor strike only temporarily reinforced the change of direction indicated by the polls, and because of the backlash for Labor at the end, the strike was not the determining factor. The reactor strike did however have an enduring effect on the peace process, which at this time was in very low gear. For several months we had tried to persuade Sadat that it was time for another Begin-Sadat meeting in order to give the peace process a boost and bring the Camp David accords to complete fruition. Finally, Sadat had agreed, and he and Begin did meet at Ophira-now known as Sharm el Sheikh—at the bottom of the Sinai Peninsula. Israel was still in control of that part of the Sinai; the withdrawal had not been completed. So Sadat came to Israeli occupied Sinai. The meetings were very pleasant; the two principals reached some agreements about restarting negotiations. They got along very well. Two days later, the Israelis hit the Iraqi reactor. The Egyptians felt totally betrayed. All over the Arab world, people added two and two and got five. All of Egypt's Arab enemies, which were quite numerous in these days, accused Sadat not only of groveling before the Israelis, but also of plotting with them just

two days earlier to strike an Arab state. Many Arabs were already furious with Egypt for having broken the solidarity of the Arab world by making peace with Israel and many Arab countries were already boycotting Egypt. You could never dissuade the Egyptians or any Arabs from their conviction that either Begin had told Sadat in advance of the strike, or that he had deliberately ensnared him in the appearance of collusion by insisting on the date of the meeting and soon thereafter launching a strike. That suspicion of the Israeli leadership fed the old stereotypes of the “tricky, wily Jews” and had a very negative effect on Israeli-Egyptian relations for a long time. In fact, one might say that the relationship still suffers from that series of events; Mubarak has refused to meet with Shamir since Sadat's funeral in 1981. One reason, as we understand it, has been Mubarak's suspicion that Shamir would use the meeting to set the Egyptians up in some way; in other words, the Israelis would use the meeting to humiliate Mubarak as Sadat had been humiliated by Begin.

Q: Were there any warnings about Israeli thoughts on the reactor and the need to take it out?

LEWIS: There were a lot of clues at the time. I learned about the strike in one of the most dramatic episodes of my time in Israel. On a Saturday evening, my wife Sallie and I had been at a party in Kfar Shmarya and we were then due to go to the Hilton hotel in Tel Aviv for dinner for the visiting head of City Bank, Bill Butcher. He had been in town meeting a lot of the financial leaders of Israel. The dinner was being given by the Minister of Finance. Before the dinner, I had promised to give Butcher a briefing on the Israeli political and economic scene. We agreed to meet at his hotel for that before dinner. As Sallie and I arrived at Butcher's hotel, we learned that Congressman Jack Kemp, now the Secretary of Housing and Urban Development, was with Butcher. So in effect, I ended up briefing both, although I had already talked to Kemp. Butcher had a junior suite which had a sitting area separated by a low partition from the bedroom. We were discussing Israel's economy when a phone call came for me; the Embassy duty officer and my office had my schedule and knew where I would be. It was the Prime Minister on the other end, who said: “ Sam, I would like you to convey urgently a message from me to President Reagan. About one

hour ago, our Air Force destroyed the nuclear reactor near Baghdad; all the planes have returned safely. Please transmit that news as quickly as possible". I was sitting on the edge of the bed and I paused briefly. Then I said: "All right, Mr. Prime Minister, I'll get in touch with Washington right away. Is there anything else you would like to tell me about the event". He said: "We will give a full briefing to your military people right away". So I hung up the phone and called the Embassy and asked my aide who was in his office, to come to the hotel immediately. I would meet him outside the door. I returned to the sitting area and I calmly continued the briefing on the intricacies and troubles—which were great then—of the Israeli economy. Sallie looked at me and she knew something was going on. I didn't mention the Prime Minister's message. Then there was a knock on the door; I went and opened it. Our military attach# and his assistant were there. We went out in the hall; shortly thereafter my aide appeared. The military officers were on their way to the Ministry of Defense for a special briefing. I wrote out a "Flash" cable to the White House with Begin's message. My aide took it back to the Embassy and sent it. The officers went to MOD and got the details which they reported to Washington through their channels. Then I went back into the hotel room, completed the briefing and went to dinner. It was supposed to be attended by five ministers, but only two showed up—Modai, the Minister of Energy, and Sharon. Some others drifted in later. I told Sallie on the way to the dinner what had happened. She was sitting next to Sharon at dinner. As soon as they got to the table, Sharon grabbed Sallie by the arm and asked whether I had told her anything. She said: "Told me what?". He looked at her quizzically and said: "He did tell you, didn't he?". We learned later that Begin had summoned all the Cabinet members on Saturday afternoon to his house in Jerusalem without telling them what the purpose of the meeting would be. Once there, he briefed about the air raid, which had already begun, but he wouldn't let anyone leave the house until the planes had returned safely to their bases. He wanted to avoid leaks and to keep the Cabinet together while the mission was going on. That is why the invited Ministers trickled in so slowly to the dinner in Tel Aviv. At this point, the information was still secret and in fact there was a big internal debate within the Israeli high command as to whether it was better to keep it secret. If the Iraqis

wanted to go public, that was one matter; there was a strong feeling that Israel should keep quiet otherwise. Also the Iran-Iraq war was going on and the Iranians had already tried to attack that reactor previously, but had been unsuccessful. So there could have been some ambiguity about the attacker, at least publicly. As it turned out, Begin and his colleagues were too full of pride about the extraordinary professionalism of the attack to keep quiet very long and the story leaked out rather quickly—in about 24 hours—and eventually it was officially announced by the Israeli government.

When I heard the news from the Prime Minister, it came as quite a shock. We had of course heard discussions of the possibility and therefore were not totally surprised. Almost a year earlier, I had been called in by Begin and the Defense people several times; the Israelis were deeply concerned about Iraq's developing nuclear capabilities. The American and Israeli intelligence communities were exchanging intelligence on the status of that reactor. There was a big disagreement between the American and Israeli experts about when the reactor might go into operation and might start producing what might be potentially nuclear weapons-grade fuel. Through the fall and winter, we exchanged intelligence and assessments, with U.S. experts feeling that completion was several years away while the Israelis were saying that it was one or two years away. We all agreed that the Iraqis were seeking to develop the capability for a nuclear weapon through the use of the production of enriched uranium from the reactor. The debate was about how far the Iraqis had come and how close they were to achieving that production. We tried through diplomatic channels to encourage the French and Italians to stop their companies from assisting the Iraqi effort. They were supplying the low enriched uranium which would fuel the reactor initially. We were not having much success. Throughout early 1981, there were some unexplained events—a laboratory in France would blow up or a reactor core would be mysteriously damaged before shipment or a couple of scientists were kidnapped and disappeared. The assumption was that Israel was not just relying on our diplomatic effort to slow down the project, but were using their own clandestine means to try to stop it. But it kept going forward and as the winter progressed, I began to hear and relayed to

Washington a rising Israeli refrain: “Either the US does something to stop this reactor or we will have to!”. Tom Pickering, who was then the Department's Assistant Secretary for Science and Technology, came for a special visit in late autumn to share with the Israeli our best understanding of the status of construction of that reactor. We exchanged views on the progress of the project. It was an effort on our part to impart the seriousness with which we viewed the construction of the reactor and to forestall what eventually took place anyway. There were continual leaks in the Israeli press about the seriousness with which Israel viewed the Iraqi efforts. The Israelis were using a lot of different ways to signal us that we had better find ways to stop the project or else they would have to do it themselves.

All the messages on the reactor were of course “Top Secret” with very limited distribution. After Carter's defeat, as is customary, the government agencies prepare elaborate briefing papers for the transition teams to bring the new administration up to date on the outstanding issues. In the foreign affairs field, the key issues that will confront the administration in the first three months of its tenure are supposed to be identified. I had sent a whole stream of messages about our conversations with the Israelis, Begin's warnings and our sharing of intelligence information. I was concerned that this issue might be over-looked in the transition. So I contacted Washington informally to make sure that a full paper on this subject was being prepared for the transition team. The paper was prepared, but under very restrictive terms—very few copies, very limited distribution. I assumed that the paper would go to Haig and that it would receive appropriate attention. However, there seems to have been a real bureaucratic “glitch” and the top people in the new administration were never made aware of this situation, even though both State and the intelligence community had full documentation. The transition paper wasn't considered in the White House at all. Moreover, about the turn of the year, the subject seemed to have disappeared from any conversations. The Israelis stopped complaining; they stopped calling me in; they stopped press leaks. The subject just disappeared. In retrospect, that should have been a clear tip off. But we were busy with other matters that I discussed

earlier, especially the Syrian missiles in Lebanon. We now know that Begin decided around the first of the year that the Israelis would have to attack the nuclear reactor; they couldn't wait for it to go “critical”. His experts were telling him, as he explained to me later, that if the reactor were bombed after it had gone “critical” there was a real risk of nuclear material fall-out over Baghdad which would have killed a lot of innocent civilians. The reactor had to be destroyed before it went “critical”. I think Begin was genuinely concerned about the prospect of civilian casualties. As the spring moved on, the Israeli experts were predicting that the plant could go “critical” as early as the end of the summer. Our people, on the other hand, were still predicting that this stage would not be reached for another two years at least.

The Israelis must have begun preparations for the strike around the first of the year 1981. They practiced the bombing runs on the Negev desert in secrecy. The whole episode has been written up subsequently in various memoirs, but the U.S. government somehow just lost sight of the whole issue in the first part of 1981, and I'm afraid I “went to sleep” about it also. There have been subsequent allegations that Al Haig was aware of the situation because the Israeli Chief of Intelligence, General Seguy, who was in Washington in February, had allegedly warned Haig. I recently asked Haig about this story and he insists that he had no knowledge of the situation and had never been briefed by any of the Israelis. So, when on June 6, my flash message reached the White House, Reagan and Dick Allen, then the NSC Advisor, were thunder-struck. The President had been a great friend and admirer of Israel during his life—he had given speeches on behalf of the United Jewish Appeal and had a lot of Jewish friends—and he liked Begin, although he had only met him once when he was Governor of California. He admired Begin's anti-communism and tough stance and there was a good deal of mutual admiration. Reagan couldn't understand how the Israelis could have taken this action without checking with the United States or talking or consulting with us. He was quite angry. After the attack, there was an uproar in the Arab world and at the UN and in the media world-wide. There was an immediate effort to condemn Israel in the Security Council. Haig was also surprised, but

his professional admiration for the attack and his understanding of the security implications of the reactor were such that secretly he felt that it had been a good idea, although he couldn't say so publicly. He did his best to minimize the U.S. reaction to the air raid, but there was a considerable amount of political pressure developing in the United States and the President himself was quite angry. I learned all of this through a telephone call from a friend of mine on the NSC. I then realized that maybe the new administration did not know about the history; otherwise it would not have been so totally surprised. I sent a long cable to the White House, summarizing the history that led up to the air attack, including the diplomatic exchanges, the Israeli warnings and other events. I was told later that my cable was one of the few cables that was ever shown the President. He read it and said that it did put a different light on the situation and his anger was somewhat assuaged. Then there was a lot of scurrying trying to find out what happened to the paper written for the transition team and there were some scapegoats fingered. It was not a good time for certain people. As far as Reagan was concerned, this was his first indication that the Israelis were pretty independent and while they admired the U.S. and they liked him, they did have their own agenda, which meant that we would not always agree.

[August 6, 1991] (A continuation of the section dictated on July 25, 1991)

LEWIS: I would now like to expand on some themes that I discussed earlier. A number of people have asked over the years why the Reagan administration did not accept President Carter's and Ambassador Linowitz' advice and immediately appoint a new negotiator for the autonomy talks. This might have kept up the momentum of those talks, which by January 1981 had made considerable headway, although they had not yet come to the hardest issues. One of the reasons was politics; it had been Carter's Camp David, not Reagan's. Furthermore, as I mentioned earlier, the two administrations had a different perspective on the Middle East. In addition, the new Reagan administration was diverted from the Middle East in the early days of its tenure; when the new administration took office, it wanted to make sure that the peace treaty and the withdrawal of Israeli forces from Sinai, which was scheduled to be completed by April, 1982, would proceed on

schedule without any “explosions” intervening. Under the Treaty, the UN was required to field a peace-keeping force to separate the Israelis and the Egyptians after Israel's withdrawal from the Sinai was completed.

At the time of Camp David, we understood that there was considerable opposition to Camp David in the Arab world. The Russians were not all sympathetic to our bilateral efforts, as they correctly saw the Camp David process. During the Camp David negotiations, we added language to the agreement which would protect it if the UN did not do what it was supposed to; i.e., provide the peace-keeping forces. There was actually an exchange of letters to reinforce the accord language, by which the United States assured the two other parties that if the UN didn't provide the “peace keepers”, we would assure the provision of the necessary troops and station them wherever necessary. As we had feared might happen, the UN Security Council did not approve the Camp David accords or the Peace Treaty, yielding to the threat of a Soviet veto. I believe that we didn't push the issue hard enough in the Security Council in order to force that veto; it would have been an interesting illustration of the Russians' alleged commitment to peace. But since all the Arab states, except Egypt, were also opposed to the agreements, the Carter administration waffled and didn't push the issue as hard as it should have, thereby relieving the UN from having to take any formal notice of this piece of history. The UN didn't even register the Accord or the Peace Treaty!

1981 arrived and only one year was left to the final phase of Sinai withdrawal and there was no UN peacekeeping force in sight. The administration therefore had to face the alternative as stipulated at Camp David. Ultimately, the United States put together what became known as the Multilateral Force and Observers (MFO) which was deployed to the Sinai where it still exists today. During 1981 and into 1982, a lot of diplomatic energy was expended to put the MFO together. Michael Sterner, who had been our Ambassador in Bahrain after having been a deputy assistant secretary in the NEA Bureau, was named the special negotiator to bring the MFO into being. The U.S. devised a tripartite agreement—Egypt, Israel and the U.S.—which brought into being a unique peace-keeping

force, modeled on the UN forces in Lebanon and elsewhere, but substituting for the UN Secretary General an American Director General who was to be based in Rome, a military commander drawn from Norway and so on. Throughout the Spring of 1982, Secretary Haig, with Ambassador Sterner doing the actual negotiating, was pushing Israel and Egypt very hard to agree on the ground rules for this peace-keeping force. Incidentally, we achieved a major breakthrough on the financial arrangements which should be a precedent for UN peace-keeping efforts; since the forces were being inserted into the Sinai to the advantage of Egypt and Israel who wanted them to safeguard the Peace Treaty, both countries agreed to pay one-third of the costs each, with the United States also paying one-third. So the costs of MFO has always been shared equally by the three parties.

In a sense, we were doing the UN's work for it. I and some others were annoyed by this, but the problem was of course that the Security Council was ham-strung by the Russians and their veto. Also, as I said earlier, I don't think that the U.S. government pushed the issue hard enough. By the time the Reagan administration took office, it was too late to do anything in the UN, even if the Reagan administration had wanted to, which was highly unlikely in view of its generally negative view of the UN.

In June 1981, Sterner was able to announce that agreement on the MFO had been reached. The balance of the year was devoted to U.S. diplomatic efforts to find countries willing to send some military detachments to the Sinai. Initially, a lot of countries, including those that had often contributed to UN peacekeeping efforts like the Scandinavians, were very reluctant because this was not to be an UN operation. They didn't see the MFO as an appropriate vehicle for them. We had to send emissaries all around the world; we had to cash in a lot of “political chips” in order to get countries to contribute small forces. It was important that we have a true multilateral force and ultimately approximately fifteen nations did take part and are still part of the force today. By the latter part of 1981, we had pledges from Colombia, Fiji and one or two other countries, but the Europeans were being very reluctant. We wanted some European involvement and ultimately we managed to get force

contributions from France, Great Britain and Italy, but only after much high level pressure from the Reagan administration. After we had exerted the pressure and had obtained reluctant participation by these European countries, the Israelis then gave us a lot of grief about these countries—they didn't trust the French, in particular, and weren't enthusiastic about the British or the Italians either as neutral peace-keepers. As late as January 1982, Begin was still complaining about European participation and wondering whether he could really accept them. That of course insulted the Europeans a great deal when they learned about Israeli objections.

The whole MFO story—its design, its implementation—is a little known bit of history. It took a lot of energy in 1981 and it was a tremendous success; it was one of the great successes of American diplomacy, which is scarcely noted today because it has been so successful. The force is about 2,500 men. The Israelis insisted on a large American component because we were the only ones they trusted to stay in the Sinai if there were trouble. They always remembered the 1967 situation when the UN suddenly pulled its forces out of Sinai at the Egyptians' request, which opened the door to the 1967 war. In the MFO agreement, there is a specific reference to the fact that the force must stay in the Sinai unless requested by both parties to withdraw. That barred a repetition of the 1967 experience; nevertheless, the Israelis wanted a large American contingent. It was difficult enough to get the U.S. to commit to a contingent at all but finally the U.S. agreed to commit one airborne battalion—roughly 1,000 men, which alternatively is drawn every six months from the 101st and 82nd Airborne Divisions. Over the years, these troops have gotten good desert training out of this assignment because the American battalion is deployed in the lower part of the Sinai toward Sharm el Sheikh, covering about the lower one third of the coast. Initially there was also a Fijian battalion and a third battalion made up of a number of other forces and there were some headquarters units. The Italians supplied three mine sweepers, which is the major component of the MFO Navy, headquartered at Sharm el Sheikh to patrol the Strait of Tiran. It is a very interesting operation which has been going since 1982 with no incidents. There have been some

diplomatic problems, but it is the most successful example of multilateral peace-keeping in a difficult part of the world. One reason that it works is that both Egypt and Israel want it to, but that would not have been enough by itself.

That issue was one of several that were being dealt with during this period. I was involved very directly with the design of the force and joined Sterner in many of his negotiating sessions. I was very much involved in the whole process up to launch date.

One other issue was the Syrian missile crisis which I mentioned earlier. Around June, 1981 Habib and his mission were diverted from the Syrian missile problem to trying to avoid a war between the PLO in Lebanon and the Israelis. He began to expend more and more of his energies on this problem. In early July, the border area heated up considerably. There were PLO rocket attacks on July 15, for example, on the cities of Nahariyya and Qiryat Shemona. There were three civilians killed and 17 wounded. That was a beginning of an escalation which went on for several days, during which the Israelis were retaliating with air strikes, with increasing force, in an effort to take out the PLO's Katusha rockets and long range artillery in South Lebanon. The PLO increased its bombardment of the cities and particularly Qiryat Shemona. On July 17, there was a heavy Israeli raid on PLO headquarters in West Beirut during which an estimated 150 people were killed. That raid triggered a Washington reaction because we were in the process of delivering some F-16s to the Israelis which they had earlier procured and paid for. The Reagan Administration decided to suspend deliveries as long as the air raids continued, which it considered a “disproportionate reaction”. That, of course, infuriated Begin. Habib had been sent to the area to try to reduce tensions and to essentially mediate between the PLO and the Israelis in order to achieve a cease-fire, at least. The U.S. could not officially speak to the PLO, so that Habib had to communicate with the PLO through the Lebanese and Saudi Arabian governments. That meant that he had to shuttle from Jerusalem to Beirut and back again to try to calm the passions without ever being in direct communications with the PLO. Although Habib was formally a Presidential envoy, he was reporting to Haig and to the Department. He did stay in touch with the White House and

vice-versa, but as a disciplined Foreign Service officer, he knew that his main contact was the Department and the Secretary.

Early in June, as I have mentioned, the Israelis had struck the Iraqi nuclear reactor. That caused a big uproar in the world and in the UN which finally forced the U.S.—very reluctantly—to join in a resolution of condemnation of Israel, which was passed by the Security Council unanimously. The Israeli attack infuriated the White House and it ordered a suspension of aircraft delivery to Israel because these aircraft had been procured under the Arms Export Act which allowed sales only for the purposes of self-defense. Deliveries were suspended while the U.S. lawyers were studying the question of whether the attack was for self-defense. If they had found that Israel had been in violation of the law, the Act would have required the U.S. to suspend deliveries of all military material to Israel. The suspension of F-16 deliveries lasted through the second half of June and all of July. It became a tremendous issue between Begin and Washington. The Israelis were highly offended and angered by Washington's actions, particularly when at the same time, the administration was pushing a large sale of AWACs aircraft to Saudi Arabia which was pending Congressional approval. By early July, Washington was under severe pressure from American supporters of Israel and by Israel itself which resented the way it was being treated. Finally Reagan decided that it was time to try to calm the rough waters and he sent Bud McFarlane, then the Counselor in the State Department and a close collaborator of Haig's, to Israel.

Bud arrived In Israel on July 11, 1981. His aim was to reach some kind of joint US-Israel statement which would paper over the dispute between our two countries over the air raid on Iraq and would permit the resumption of the arms deliveries. McFarlane had not had much experience in the Middle East and was very nervous about his mission, which was a tough one to be sure. I spent a lot of time with him when he first arrived; he stayed at the residence with us. We talked most of the night prior to his meetings with Begin the next day. Simultaneously, Habib and Morris Draper, his deputy, were flying in and out of town. So on Sunday, July 12, we had Habib meeting with Begin on one issue and

McFarlane and I meeting with Begin on another issue! The subjects were different, but obviously complementary. Habib was trying to stop a war from breaking out in Lebanon and McFarlane was trying to stop a war from breaking out between Washington and Jerusalem. It was very interesting to be involved simultaneously with both emissaries' efforts throughout that weekend.

The initial McFarlane meetings with Begin were held on Monday morning, July 13. Habib had spent time with Begin the previous day. Monday afternoon, we met with Dave Kimche and other Foreign Ministry staff and Ambassador Evron and then returned to Begin's office that evening. It was a full day for Bud McFarlane. The end result of these meetings was very good because Begin and McFarlane agreed on some language for a public statement. Essentially, the two parties agreed that the misunderstandings that had arisen as a result of the air attack on the Iraqi nuclear reactor had now been resolved to the satisfaction of both sides. The Israelis understood that statement to open the way for a resumption of the deliveries of the F-16s. Begin was masterful in these meetings and McFarlane was completely taken in—that may be a slight overstatement. But the general impression among the Israelis was that Begin had taken McFarlane to the cleaners during the discussion; I must say that I did not totally disagree with that characterization. To be fair, however, Bud's charter was to smooth Begin's ruffled feathers and to move on with outstanding business; he did achieve those objectives.

Of course, three days later, the Israelis undertook a major air attack on the PLO headquarters in West Beirut, as I mentioned earlier. That raised the same legal issues again, just after McFarlane's departure, and the perception that relationships had gone back to calmer days. The Beirut raid triggered another announcement from Washington that arms deliveries would be postponed further. That infuriated Begin. Haig publicly stated that the resumption of deliveries would be affected by Israel's cooperation in our efforts to reduce the level of violence in Lebanon. That effort was being spearheaded by Habib, as I have said, who worked very hard. A major war in Lebanon might have drawn the Syrians in with unpredictable consequences. Meanwhile, Israelis had by this time reached the

conclusion that they did not have an effective defense against the Katusha rocket. Initially, in late June, when the shelling began, the Air Force was very confident it could knock out the rockets quickly. And indeed, the rockets were being hit, but many were still being fired. Day after day, Katushas would land in Israel, particularly in the northern tier around Qiryat Shemona. Pressures from the population began to mount on Begin; the country was appalled by what appeared to be a total absence of defense against the rockets. It became obvious to Habib that Begin really did want a graceful way out of the confrontation. He did not want to bomb the Syrian missiles because that might result in a war with Syria; there was no easy military counter-measure to the Katushas—the Israelis could inflict heavy casualties on the PLO in Lebanon, but were not able to find either the long-range artillery pieces because they were being hidden very effectively or the rocket launchers which were very mobile. Katushas, manufactured by the USSR, are rather small and have a range of about 13-14 kilometers, up to 50 in the larger models. They could not be easily located. They would kill a person here and there, but they were primarily a psychological weapon because they forced the people around Qiryat Shemona and in the northern areas to spend a lot of time in the air raid shelters. Every night they would be in the shelters. The psychological strain was creating a huge political problem for Begin and the government. So Begin was encouraging Habib to continue his “shuttle diplomacy” while at the same time threatening to take dreadful actions. He was really hoping that Habib would be able to resolve the issue and ultimately Habib did work out a cease-fire between the PLO and Israel, a very unique achievement. Begin would of course never admit publicly that he had negotiated anything with the hated PLO and Habib was not meeting with them directly, but he had developed a formula by which parallel announcements would be made by both sides. On July 24, Habib was able to publicly announce, after a meeting with Begin, that he had reported to President Reagan that all hostile military actions on Lebanese and Israeli territories in either direction would cease. Begin said that the Israeli cabinet endorsed that Habib statement. There never was a written and signed document nor was there ever an agreed interpretation of that language. Therefore, during the ensuing year, there was a lot of wrangling during which the PLO asserted that the language was limited

to prohibiting actions that might have taken place across the Lebanon-Israel border but that the Habib statement did not restrict them from attacking anywhere else. Israel, on the other hand, interpreted the language to bar all attacks on Israel proper or on Israeli interests anywhere in the world and on all Jews in the world. The American interpretation —i.e., Habib's—was that attacks across any of Israel's borders—land and sea, from Jordan and from Lebanon—would cease, but that actions outside that area were not covered. There was an attack by the PLO on a French synagogue in Paris later in the year which threatened the cease-fire because of the Israeli interpretation. It was in any case a major achievement for Habib which got him a lot of credit with the White House.

I left Israel on July 14, 1981 for home leave. I had been in the country for four years and this was my second home leave. I did not return until late August and I left Bill Brown in charge of the Embassy. Bill Brown was my third DCM of the four that I had over 8 years. He came to Tel Aviv in 1979 and stayed until 1982. He had been the head of our special office in Taiwan, although he was a Russian scholar; he had also become a Chinese expert and linguist as well as one of the Foreign Service's small handful of Mongolian speakers. He was and is a terrific person—a rock of Gibraltar in the difficult times that he was in Israel with me. He is now our Ambassador to Israel, following Tom Pickering, who went as our Ambassador to the UN at the beginning of the Bush administration. So he got his “trial by fire” during the 1979-82 period.

Q: Is the fact that Pickering is at the UN a great help to global understanding?

LEWIS: I think so. Tom has remarkable qualifications for the New York job, where he has performed superbly. He was our ambassador in Jordan when I was in Israel. Later, of course, he succeeded me in Tel Aviv. He therefore has a unique perspective on the issues that confront him. In any case, he is a very brilliant person. He has been a big help and may be even more help in the period ahead since it looks like we are entering a period of negotiations between Arabs and Israelis.

After my return, I spent a couple of days in Washington, debriefing and participating in the usual kinds of meetings that one has when he is on home leave. Then I spent several weeks after that out of the action. I would return every once in a while because I would be called back. Initially, I had gone diving which was one of my favorite avocations—I did that whenever I could sneak away to the Sinai. I had made arrangements to spend ten days of my home leave on a Cousteau society diving expedition in the British Virgin Islands. I did that almost immediately after returning to the U.S. But as soon as I returned from that, about August 5, I was told to hurry to Washington, where I was brought up to date on all that had happened since I had left. One of the things that I learned was that there was a new Israeli government following the elections at the end of June, which Peres and the Labor Party barely had lost, as I described earlier. Throughout July—the cease-fire negotiations, the flap over the suspension of F-16 deliveries, etc.—there had been a caretaker government. Begin was spending a lot of time trying to put together a coalition government that could get the support of the Knesset. He finally succeeded and his new government was announced on August 4, just as I was coming back from the deeps in the Virgin Islands. In the meantime, the MFO agreement had been signed and had named Ray Hunt as its first Director General. He was a terrific officer; he had been the Executive Director of NEA and was a superb choice for the MFO job. Unfortunately, a couple of years later he was assassinated in Rome by some terrorists in front of his apartment. He had no bodyguards and was identified as a high ranking American official. One of the radical PLO groups killed him to symbolize their opposition to the peace between Egypt and Israel. A major loss! Ray was succeeded by Peter Constable; now the Director General is Wat Cluverius who, as Consul General in Jerusalem, had been an active player in the negotiations in the time we are now discussing. When I returned to Washington, I discovered that my future nemesis and not-very-close friend, Ariel Sharon, had been named Defense Minister in the new Begin government. I described earlier how he managed to get that job. His appointment was bad news. Also the religious parties got a lot of favors from the Likud, as they always do. They got more financial aid, they received a commitment that El Al would not fly on Saturday anymore, and a lot of other

pledges like that. While in Washington, I went through a whole series of meetings with Haig, Walt Stoessel and other senior officials. I was brought up to date and gave some advice how the U.S. might react to the new government. I spent a lot of time with Nick Veliotes, the Assistant Secretary for NEA. The key personnel change was the Sharon move from Agriculture to Defense. Shamir remained as Foreign Minister.

On August 8, 1981 the Saudis announced in Riyadh the so called “Fahd Plan” which was a new Middle East peace plan. It was the first time that the Saudis had taken any peace initiatives. The plan is still interesting; although it was immediately rejected by the Israelis and never endorsed by the U.S., it was modified later at an Arab summit in Fez, Morocco, and it sounds very much like the position that most of the Arab states are taking today, ten years later, as they consider the round of peace negotiations which Secretary Baker is pushing and which might take place in October. The “Fahd Plan” contained eight points: 1) Israeli withdrawal from all Arab territories including Jerusalem; 2) all settlements that were founded on the West bank after 1967 were to be removed; 3) guarantee of worship and rights for all religions in the Holy Places; 4) the inalienable rights of the Palestinians; 5) compensation for the Palestinians who do not wish to return to their homelands; 6) guarantees of the right of the Palestinian people to their own state, with Jerusalem as its capital; 7) a UN mandate for several months over the West Bank and Gaza for a transition period while the Israelis withdraw and the Palestinians set up their own government and; 8) as the only gesture towards Israel, the right of the states in the region to live in peace. These points have been cited continually since 1981 and are used by many Arab spokesmen as evidence of the Arab acceptance of Israel as a sovereign state in the region. It could be interpreted in that fashion, but we should note that the name “Israel” never appeared in the “Fahd” plan. It is not surprising that the Israelis did not find the plan as a positive contribution to peace efforts, nor did the Reagan administration, although some of the professionals in the State Department were quite intrigued by it. They saw it as the beginning of a new and more realistic phase of Arab attitudes toward the area.

On August 17, 1981 Reagan finally approved the release of the F-16 aircraft to Israel. Secretary Haig, in a press conference, explained that the legal review had been completed and that an intensive government review failed to determine whether Israel's bombing of the Iraqi reactor was either defensive or offensive—if the latter there may have been a possible violation of the 1952 arms agreement. That is how the deliveries were resumed. It reflected in essence the Reagan administration's decision to reestablish better relationships with Israel and the new Begin government. The administration had concluded that Begin would be in office for an extensive period and therefore we had to find a way to reestablish a sense of trust and understanding that had been quite frayed during June and July.

I might mention that there is still another current event that has a relationship to the 1981 period. Recently, the Democratic leadership in Congress announced that it would have a formal investigation of the “October surprise”—i.e., the charge being that members of the Reagan election campaign staff may have requested the Iranians to hold the release of the Embassy hostages until after Reagan's swearing in. The charge included some allegations that Israel had been involved with the Reagan team in the supplying of weapons to Iran which had allegedly been promised. A newspaper story dated August 21, 1981, quoted senior State Department and White House officials who had worked in the Carter administration as saying that Israel had secretly sold to Iran American spare parts for their F-4 fighter bombers in October, 1980. That sale, which indeed did take place—tires for the planes—is one of the pieces of evidence being currently considered to support the Reagan team conspiracy theory because Begin had assured Carter in early 1980 and reassured him later that year that Israel would not ship any military equipment to Iran while U.S. hostages were being held in Tehran.

The last days of my home leave were spent in Washington talking about the big event of the fall, namely the first meeting between Reagan and Begin. Begin had been invited to come to Washington in early September. Nick Veliotes and I and others met on August

10 to plan for the visit. There were some in the White House and in the State Department who thought that Reagan should be quite tough on Begin in this first meeting to show him who was “the boss”. The summer events had proven to Reagan's team that Begin would not be an easy person to deal with. On the other hand, there was great sympathy in the administration for Israel's security problems. We had lengthy discussions on how to treat Begin—a subject to which I had devoted considerable time in 1977 at the time of the first Begin-Carter meeting. Ultimately, we laid out a program intended to play up to Begin's love of ceremony, honors and sense of equality as the head of an allied government. I found that Haig especially, who knew Begin and rather liked him, was very much in agreement with me on what the visit should emphasize. Haig and I saw the Israeli problem from the same point of view; some people in NEA did not always share this outlook because they had less sympathy towards Israel and less understanding of what made the Israelis tick.

In addition to the Begin visit, we had to wrestle with the AWACs sale. For reasons that were never clear to me, the administration was following through on a commitment that Carter had made to the Saudis to sell them these very sophisticated planes. As I mentioned earlier, Carter had indicated to his successor his willingness to submit the sales proposal to Congress in the final days of his administration, but the Reagan team did not pick up the offer. So in the spring, 1981, despite its understanding of the delicate nature of the subject for Israel and its American supporters, the Reagan administration decided to proceed with the sale. It invested a huge amount of energy and political capital over the summer and early fall in obtaining Congressional approval of the sale. The Israeli government, despite its desire to establish good relations with the Reagan White House, decided to oppose the sale for valid defense reasons, as Israelis saw them. I never found their arguments very persuasive nor did a lot of people in Washington. The central Israeli argument was that an AWAC plane flying above north-west Saudi Arabia could monitor all activities on all Israeli airfields. The Israelis saw also the possibility of an Arab coalition in the future which could use AWACs to great advantage. The Israelis did not really fear the Saudis; they were much more concerned that American arms sold to Saudi might

eventually fall into the hands of an Arab coalition; that was their main concern. They pointed to the historical fact that in every war it had ever fought, military equipment of one Arab country had been used in a war by other Arab armies against them. For example, the Iraqis and the Saudis had sent expeditionary forces in 1967. It is true that they didn't fight very well, but they participated. The Israelis assumed that if they were forced into a war with Syria, the Saudis might join again; for that reason, the Israelis didn't want them to have the best U.S. equipment.

The administration made an effort throughout the summer and into the fall to dissuade the Israelis from opposing the sale. We made all sorts of arguments; the administration consulted extensively with Congressional Israeli supporters, with AIPAC and with leaders of American Jewish organizations. Our theme was that the U.S. could have parallel relationships with Israel and Saudi Arabia and that Israel didn't have a better friend than Reagan who would never do anything to hurt Israel's security. The suggestion was of course that Israel stop its opposition. But the advice was not accepted and a tremendous amount of lobbying and political effort had to be mounted in order to obtain Congressional approval. That was finally obtained, but only at considerable political cost to the administration.

At the same time, efforts were being made to rekindle the peace process—i.e., the autonomy negotiations. As I mentioned earlier, the Egyptians felt double-crossed because Sadat had met at Sharm el Sheikh with Begin only a few days before the Iraqi raid. During the summer of 1981, there was very little warmth between Cairo and Jerusalem. The U.S. was not pushing the autonomy negotiations, although we were anxious for the relationships between the two countries to warm up. We were looking forward to the completion of the withdrawal in 1982. The MFO negotiations had gone reasonably well. On August 25, Sadat and Begin finally met again, this time in Alexandria for two days. The principal objective of the meeting was to reestablish reasonable relationships. We were not present, but learned about the meeting by being briefed by the participants—Roy Atherton, our Ambassador in Egypt, by the Egyptians and me by the Israelis. It became

quite clear to us that this was probably the best meeting that the two leaders ever had. They had finally managed to deal with each other, not as close friends, but with a degree of understanding, friendliness and genuineness which had not been in existence since the days immediately following Sadat's visit to Jerusalem. At the meeting, they agreed to resume the autonomy negotiations at the ministerial level in Cairo. Moreover, Sharon, the Israeli Defense Minister and Boutros Ghali, the Egyptian Minister of State for Foreign Affairs, announced that they would sponsor four different joint committees to work out all the necessary arrangements for the withdrawal from the Sinai. All of these were good omens and suggested that relationships might be back on track, which also helped the new Reagan administration to have renewed confidence in Begin, who was about to come to the United States. The Reagan administration had been in office long enough by this time to comprehend that the Camp David process was worth preserving. This certainly had been Haig's conclusion. So there was about a month of hope in the early fall of 1981 about prospects for further advancement of the peace process. I was asked to come back from my home leave again—I was then in Houston—and to fly out to Israel to talk to Begin about the AWACs issue before his trip to Washington. I was to try to obtain agreement that the Israelis would stop their objections to the sale and I was also instructed to discuss his impending visit. So on August 22, I returned to Israel and met with Begin shortly before his meeting with Sadat. I met with him a couple of times in lengthy sessions. He was very gracious and friendly, but gave me again all the reasons why the AWACs were a danger for Israel. He didn't give the assurances that Haig wanted. I stayed in Israel until September 2 for a few days catching up on events and then I returned to Washington. The day before I left, I had a three hour meeting with Sharon who was as usual very testy, exuberant and full of himself. He had lots of plans for the pacification of Lebanon; he expressed the hope that the cease-fire would hold, but if it didn't, he knew what to do about it. He also repeated his version of the settlements policy and expressed hope for closer cooperation with the U.S.!

I arrived in Washington just in time to spend several hours with Haig before Begin's arrival. I helped redraft the talking points and assisted with the planning of the Reagan-Begin meeting. If we had been paying closer attention to events, we would have been very apprehensive that Labor Day week-end. On September 3, while I was in the air, Sadat had become much testier and impatient with the growing domestic opposition. On that day, more than a thousand critics were arrested—religious extremists, intellectuals, etc. All sorts of publications were banned; a number of religious organizations were disbanded. For the first time, Sadat had cracked down hard on his opposition. He only lived for a little more than a month after that day. It has been the consensus that his actions of September 3 triggered his assassination on October 6; that, of course, can't be proved, but the evidence is pretty compelling. The September events did receive attention in Washington, but perhaps not as much as they should have. I did talk to Veliotes about them and we were quite worried, but no one foresaw Sadat's demise.

When Begin arrived on September 8, I was at the airport to welcome him. We went through the usual official visit ceremonials. There were a number of meetings with Haig, three meetings with the President, meetings at the Pentagon. The ceremonial aspects were first class. The Reagan White House had decided—correctly as far as I am concerned—that his predecessor's White House had been too casual and perhaps even too corny. So the new administration went all the way in the other direction and reinstituted all sorts of pomp and circumstance. Official visits were especially elegant. Begin was very impressed by this kind of reception; in any case, he had a lot of admiration for Reagan —a tough anti-communist. He may not have had the highest regard for the subtlety of Reagan's mind, but he certainly admired and shared his convictions and general purposes. Begin always felt that if matters were ever to become very difficult between our two governments, he could always sit down with President Reagan and convince him. The White House of course did not permit this one-on-one very often, so Begin didn't get many opportunities like that. He did get some on this first visit and there was a t#te-#-t#te meeting at the beginning.

I should say that just before Begin arrived, I had participated in a series of briefings with a variety of people. One of these meetings was a lunch session at the White House with the President, along with Haig and Veliotes. We were asked to give the President our views on how Begin might be handled. The President was very gracious and warm and seemed to be listening. He knew the basic issues and our positions. Begin was eagerly awaiting the t#te-#-t#te meeting which took place the day after our lunch with the President —September 9. He saw the meeting as an opportunity to go into some detail about his feelings of the events of the last nine months. The President and the Prime Minister had been unable to meet earlier because the White House decided—correctly, in my view— that Begin should not be invited during an Israeli election campaign which might have given him some advantage over Peres. (I had informally recommended that position to Haig and the White House.) Then the summer came with all of its problems. So nine months had passed since the beginning of the Reagan administration during which there had been two or three major confrontations with Israel. So Begin saw the meeting as the opportunity to return Israel-US relationships back on track.

Begin and Reagan sat down in the Oval office with only their respective Ambassadors as note takers. Initially there was a lot of small talk, which was Reagan's forte. He was very funny and relaxed. Then Begin launched into a lengthy discussion on the relationships between the two countries, on Israel's hopes for peace, its frustrations about Egypt and the stalled autonomy negotiations and a lot of other issues. Reagan had been carefully programmed by his staff and only fifteen minutes had been allowed for the meeting. The White House staff didn't want him to be out of their control for any longer than that. Reagan took out of his pocket the famous 3x5 cards which had his talking points on them. He politely interrupted Begin and read his talking points which were simple and straight-forward and intended to reassure Begin about the relationship. The talking points did include a couple of items which might have brought a response from Begin. This interruption gave Begin the idea that a conversation between himself and the President had in fact been initiated. But the clock kept running and Reagan began to apologize very

profusely, saying that the group that was in the Cabinet room could not be kept waiting. He then got up and led Begin into the Cabinet room where the rest of the delegations were indeed waiting for the principals. End of the t#te-#-t#te. For me that was a rather embarrassing moment. I had been used to the way Carter ran his meetings with Begin; he knew the material and didn't need any talking points and could carry on endlessly without coaching. Reagan on the other hand was tied totally to his talking points, which were written to insure that they could be delivered quickly. The schedule was also set up to prevent the President from having to speak extemporaneously for very long, if at all. When Reagan got up, Begin look bemused but acted very graciously, although I am sure he was very disappointed because he had considered that meeting to be a major part of his program. Later, he made a couple of very guarded comments to me which indicated that he had not left this first meeting with any feeling that Reagan was a very strong interlocutor.

In the Cabinet room, the delegations were congregated. The Israeli group included Shamir and Sharon. There were a lot of staffers and the table was full—one side for the Israelis and one side for the Americans. The big event of the visit was about to take place. This meeting set the tone for our relationships for the next two years and perhaps even until today. Begin had decided that since the two sides had finally met and since they held a similar views of the bipolar world, of the PLO and of some Middle East issues, it was time to acknowledge publicly that the countries were allies. Begin had always regarded this alliance as an important goal. He was always disturbed by Carter's refusal to use the word “alliance” or allow it to be used by any official when characterizing the US-Israel relationship. Begin honestly felt that Israel had done a lot for the United States in the military and intelligence fields; he recognized that Israel might have been the junior partner, but it was a partnership nevertheless. He wanted the relationship to be seen as an alliance. That made easier for him to accept American assistance without feeling that it was charity; that was the psychological background. After Reagan graciously welcomed Begin in the Cabinet room, he asked him whether he would like to make any comments.

Begin did and he launched in a tour d' horizon, describing the world as he saw it and the role the two countries had in it. He also explained what Israel's contribution was to the relationship of the two countries. Reagan was nodding, apparently agreeing with what the Prime Minister was saying. He was giving Begin positive feedback without words. After Begin's comments, there was some discussion back and forth. Then Begin suggested that since the two sides seemed to be in agreement on the fundamental perceptions and issues, Israel thought it would be a good idea to conclude a written and formal agreement on the strategic relationships. Reagan looked around to his right and his left—Weinberger was looking very grim by now, but Haig didn't appear concerned. So the President said that he thought this might be a good idea which was all Begin needed. Reagan's comment enabled Begin to pursue the issue further by suggesting that Defense Minister Sharon be permitted to brief the American side with some ideas that might give form to the relationship. Reagan agreed; so Sharon stood up with a set of maps of the Middle East and proceeded to give an absolute hair-raising description of the ways the Israeli Defense forces could be of assistance to the U.S. in contingency situations. It would have taken Israel as far East as Iran and as far north as Turkey. As Sharon made his elaborate presentation, which emphasized particularly Israeli capabilities as quick reaction forces that were highly mobile and agile, I could see Weinberger blanch visibly. His aides were equally upset. Everyone on the American side was shocked by the grandiose scope of the Sharon concept for strategic cooperation. It even included use of Israeli forces to assist the U.S. in case of uprisings in the Gulf emirates. When Sharon finished, not much was said; there were probably a few questions. Begin then suggested that if President Reagan agreed with the general outline of the Sharon presentation, the two Defense Ministers should be requested to work out the details. Reagan seemed agreeable and asked Weinberger to get together with Sharon to work out something. That made Weinberger the fall guy to get the United States out of this embarrassing situation; of course, Weinberger had no sympathy for the scheme whatsoever. He had always been very conscious of our relationships with the key Arab states; particularly the Arabian Peninsula ones. He was very concerned that any overt cooperation with Israel would jeopardize those relationships.

He felt that way in 1981 and throughout his tenure as Secretary of Defense. He showed his positions in many ways, before and during and after the Lebanon war. But now he was stuck with a presidential request to do something about the Israeli proposal, which Reagan seemed to have accepted in principle. I should note that Haig quietly sympathized with the Israeli proposal.

After the meeting, Weinberger and Sharon negotiated and their staffs negotiated for a long period of time before the first strategic cooperation agreement was finally concluded. This was a memorandum of understanding on strategic cooperation. The Pentagon's objective in the negotiations was to say as little as possible—nothing would have been the best outcome for them. They aimed for a written agreement that was so general and so empty of content that it could be defended. Furthermore, the Pentagon was intent on giving the agreement no publicity whatsoever. The Israelis, of course were just the opposite; they wanted a lot of detail and a lot of publicity. They wanted a real and binding document. Weinberger controlled the process and ultimately won out. Most of the negotiations took place in Washington; whatever was agreed to was finally signed on November 30, during a Shamir-Sharon visit to Washington in which I participated. To add insult to injury, not only was the agreement empty of practically all content, but Weinberger managed to have it signed in the basement of the Pentagon without any press present, so that it didn't get any attention. The Israeli press was fully briefed and made a big thing out of it, but there were no photographs of Weinberger signing this document with Sharon—they might have been used in the Arab world to undermine his position.

Q: Was Sharon aware of Weinberger's position from the beginning?

LEWIS: He became aware of it as events developed. It didn't take him long to understand. The result was that he became very disenchanted with the whole process. When Sharon realized during the sessions held following the White House meeting that Weinberger was very unenthusiastic about the Israeli initiative and after pushing for some resolution week after week, he would have washed his hands of the whole approach, but Begin was

determined to have the U.S.-Israel agreement because to him that signed piece of paper was much more important than the content. He wanted a symbol of the alliance; so he forced Sharon to keep plugging away. The Labor Party—the opposition—was very much opposed to the idea of the alliance; they thought it unwise to limit, in a sense, the degree of cooperation in the military area by signing a meaningless agreement. It would have preferred an unwritten understanding which would have deepened the relationship in the following years. Moreover, of course, the Labor Party didn't want to see Begin get credit with the Israeli public for something that had no significance. The Labor Party introduced a no-confidence motion in the Knesset when the agreement was signed; there was a debate in early December. Sharon, while holding his nose, had signed the agreement against his better judgment only because the Prime Minister had insisted and then was stuck with the job of defending it against Peres and the opposition speakers. He explained how the agreement was all the things which he knew it wasn't; it was one of the few moments when Sharon showed discipline and carried out orders, which has not always been his style.

The Washington visit, from Begin's point of view, was a great success. He held some very positive meetings with Congress; Israel's friends asked him some very easy questions; there was considerable admiration expressed by Congressmen and others about the daring raid on the Iraqi reactor, which was much more popular in the Congress than with the administration. Begin returned to Jerusalem feeling that he had established a solid relationship with Reagan. He felt that the “Arabists” in the State Department would no longer be in a position to undermine the new alliance which was evolving. Begin was somewhat premature in his views, unfortunately.

During September, 1981 there were some events that ensued from the Begin-Sadat meeting in Alexandria. They had agreed to renew autonomy negotiations at ministerial levels; they were scheduled for September 23 in Cairo. Dr. Burg, the Minister of Interior, was to head the Israeli delegation and Hassan Ali, the Foreign Minister, headed the Egyptian team. The U.S. didn't have a chief representative because Sol Linowitz had never been replaced by the new administration. Haig decided to ask the U.S.

ambassadors in Egypt and Israel—Roy Atherton and myself—to serve as joint heads of the U.S. delegation. I went to Cairo for the meetings. We, collectively, achieved some very positive steps in those meetings. We concluded with a joint declaration, which was really quite encouraging and seemed to get the autonomy negotiations back on the right track. We scheduled another meeting for a few weeks later. Roy and I succeeded in conducting some very useful mediation by penning some language that was acceptable to the other two delegations. The atmosphere was quite creative and serious. Sharon participated but didn't cause as much trouble as usual; he was still in the warm glow of the Washington visit; at the time, he still believed that he could work out a meaningful agreement with the United States. Therefore in September, it appeared that we had overcome the summer difficulties that the peace process was going to move forward and that the U.S.-Israel relationships had strengthened. So September seemed the high point of the Reagan administration in its Israel policy.

Bud McFarlane came to Israel on September 20 right after Begin and Sharon had returned after their Washington visit. He was representing Haig to continue discussions with Sharon on strategic cooperation. I took Bud down to Sharon's farm in the Negev where we were guests at a stag dinner during which Sharon told his war stories. He buttered us up unmercifully—he had tried to co-opt me for four years and had by this time understood that he was not convincing me. But he was nice to me and really worked McFarlane over. Bud was quite responsive. McFarlane also had meetings with people in the Foreign Ministry which were useful in giving a renewed push to the autonomy talks right before the Cairo meetings.

But on Tuesday, October 6, Sadat was assassinated. I remember that day very well. Sallie and I had gone to an Israel national tennis tournament at the Ramat Hasharon center. We had watched several matches and were doing so when I got a telephone call. It was the Embassy duty officer who had just received a “Flash” message reporting that Sadat had just been assassinated. Within a few minutes the word had spread through the crowd, which went into an extraordinary kind of a shock. It was as if the Israelis had lost a close

relative. There was a tangible sense of loss and desperation everywhere. There was an Egyptian player in the tournament—the first Egyptian professional who had come to Israel after the peace treaty. He was playing when the news came; he broke down and wept on the court and withdrew from the tournament; the tournament actually stopped then. The assassination was psychologically devastating. I knew that things were going to go off track very rapidly, but hoped that I would be wrong. The next day was Yom Kippur eve. There was a major funeral that day for one of Begin's oldest friends, Haim Landau who had been one of the original members of the Irgun. He had also been a Minister in one of Begin's first Cabinets. I had known him fairly well and went to the funeral. That night was the beginning of Yom Kippur when, in Israel, no one can travel by car; everyone walks. But I had to get to Cairo to meet Haig and to participate not only in the funeral, but in a unique American political experience. The easiest way to get there was with the Israelis; they were sending a high level delegation. There was one embarrassing issue because Begin said immediately that he wanted to go to his friend's funeral. The Egyptians were very unhappy with that suggestion; they were already not overjoyed that there would be an Israeli delegation, but the presence of the Israeli Prime Minister was more than they could face. They toyed with the idea of telling Begin not to come because of all the Arab and Muslim delegations that would be there, even though they were at the beginning of being essentially ostracized by the Arab world—there would be more later after their Sinai withdrawal; the beginnings were already being manifested in the fall of 1981. We did weigh in with the Egyptians by pointing out that their rejection of Begin would be at least awkward and might at worst have some very unhappy consequences. They backed down and Begin, Shamir and Burg flew to Cairo in a small Israeli aircraft. They invited me to go with them and I accepted. There were then essentially four of us on this small plane with the aircrew.

The American delegation was really extraordinary. It was headed formally by Al Haig, but President Reagan had also invited all the former American Presidents—Nixon, Ford and Carter—to go as part of the delegation. That was a unique event. Carter initially indicated

that he might not accept; he would go to the funeral of his friend, but didn't like the idea of being in a delegation with Nixon and Ford. He was persuaded that if he went just as a private American citizen that that would be inappropriate and so he finally agreed to go as part of the official delegation. Kissinger was part of the delegation. This group of eminent personalities flew from Washington with Nick Veliotes, as Assistant Secretary, the chief ringmaster. Roy Atherton was the host. Nick has told me a lot about the flights to and from Cairo and I have heard stories from others as well. For example, Carter and Ford had not spoken to each other before then. Nixon had not been in the public eye since leaving the White House as result of “Watergate”; he had gone through all the years of ostracism and had just started his fight back to respectability and public acceptance. This was the first time that he had been accepted in an official foreign affairs role; he was therefore going to make the most of it. On the way out, Carter and Ford were sitting across the aisle from each other in the Presidential aircraft VIP section, which was between the Presidential suite and the press and staff section. Veliotes told me that Rosalynn Carter was sitting by the window. She kept trying to divert Jimmy from Ford so that he wouldn't become involved with him because she still resented the way Jimmy had been treated during the campaign. But ultimately, Ford and Carter struck up a conversation and the tensions eased somewhat. Nixon was walking up and down the aisle telling jokes, being the life of the party. Kissinger was furious because he was sitting in the back, essentially with the press corps and the staff and not the center of the action. Al Haig occupied the Presidential quarters which holds a bed. There had been a lot of discussion about who would use the Presidential quarters; there were three former Presidents and only one bed and Haig decided that as head of the delegation it would best for him to take it; that would minimize the protocol problems. Henry was not amused by the whole situation and was very grumpy throughout the whole visit—he did not cherish the “second fiddle” role. Jeane Kirkpatrick was also a member of the delegation along with several other dignitaries.

I had very interesting insight into Sadat's funeral. It was in any case one the most bizarre events of my life. I was asked to attend the funeral, not because there was any reason

for me to attend, but because Haig was heading the U.S. delegation and he wanted to consult with me about current problems, since he was not going to come to Israel on this particular trip. The night of September 9—the day before the funeral—Haig, as head of the delegation, decided very nicely to host a dinner at the hotel just for the American delegation and for all the people in the Embassy who were working in support of the delegation, which included a lot of people. It was a lovely idea and a very nice evening, but it also very amusing. One person in the delegation was a nine year old boy who had written a letter many months before to President Sadat that somehow the Egyptian press had found. It had said some nice things about Sadat and peace. Therefore the Egyptian Foreign Ministry had indicated that they would like to invite the young man to the funeral. So he became part of the delegation and therefore attended the dinner.

The hotel room where the dinner was being given had in it a long table—sort of a dais—and several roundtables. Roy Atherton, the host, and Nick Veliotes, as ringmaster, had done their best to seat the guests at the dais. When the guests went to find their places, Henry discovered that he was sitting next to Jeane Kirkpatrick, whom apparently he detested. So he stomped over to Veliotes and demanded that his place be changed. Nick and Roy huddled together and shuffled things around. Henry then goes to his new seat and finds that he is sitting next to the nine year old boy. Now he is really unamused by this new turn of events. He didn't think that he had flown 8,000 miles to have dinner with a nine-year-old. So Henry was quite disgruntled throughout the whole affair. After dinner, each of the three former Presidents wanted to say a few words. Haig spoke first, then Carter, Ford and Nixon—after some discussion, it had been decided that they would speak in reverse order of tenure—that is, the most recent President first. Carter spoke of his appreciation for Sadat and of his relationship with Sadat- a very Carteresque, emotional and genuine speech—a little syrupy, but nice. Ford gave a typical Ford speech—absolutely appropriate and absolutely forgettable. No one could remember, after he sat down, one thing that he said, but it had all sounded fine at the time. Then came Nixon. He gave what I consider to be the most extraordinary after dinner speech I had ever heard.

He started out by expressing his gratitude for the opportunity to be there and for President Reagan's invitation, mentioning the special nature of the occasion and talked briefly about Sadat. Before getting to Sadat, he very deftly established his seniority over the other two Presidents by talking about his many visits to many foreign countries, first as Senator, then as Vice-President and then as President—covering a twenty-year period. He was subtly reminding everybody how more experienced he was. Then he launched into a discussion of what he had always been most grateful for during those many visits; namely the support he had received from the Embassy staffs. He said that without Embassy people, he and others could not have done anything. He just went on and on about how wonderful the Embassies and the Foreign Service had been; how much of his success in life he owed to these wonderful Foreign Service people and especially the local employees without whom we could not run our operations overseas—he even mentioned the chauffeurs who drove him around overseas. He gushed like that for about ten minutes. And then he said: “In all of these visits, there are the big state dinners and functions—just one big event after another. How could the United States be appropriately represented overseas without the waiters that make the functions such huge successes?”. The waiters who were there were of course all smiling. I thought Nixon was making a speech at a waiters' convention or before a waiters trade union audience! Eventually he got to Sadat and said a few things about him. But all the Foreign Service people who heard Nixon that night, remembered all the things he had said about them when he was President; there was considerable skepticism about his comments in the audience. But he put on a real show which is hard to describe. Everyone was giggling and snickering. The speeches were followed by pictures —lots and lots of photographs. The three former Presidents, the three former Presidents with Al Haig, the three former presidents with Henry Kissinger, etc. Then Nixon called all the waiters and has his picture taken with them; that was his codicil to his waiters' speech. It was an evening to remember!

That funeral delegation had some far-reaching consequences because it was on that trip that Carter and Ford established their first connection. On the return trip, I am told,

they began to discuss the possibility of doing some joint projects for good causes. From that, sprang an association which has sponsored a number of joint enterprises and appearances. And Nixon began his rehabilitation process. The funeral itself was accompanied by dozens and dozens of bilateral meetings between delegations. Begin and his ministerial colleagues walked along with the other hundreds along the streets. The Israeli attendance was a little sticky, but the Egyptians pulled it off very nicely. There was a tremendous tension about security; everyone was scared of the obvious possibilities, but fortunately nothing happened.

Haig met with Begin to discuss what could be done without Sadat to maintain momentum in the autonomy talks and on Israel-Egypt relationships in general. The most interesting aspects of the ceremonies, besides the dinner I described earlier, was the feed-back I got from the Israelis on the return flight to Israel. Begin, Shamir and Burg had had a separate session with Vice President, now President Mubarak, who had not been a very prominent player in the Camp David process. He had not been at Camp David and had not gone to Jerusalem with Sadat. The Israeli delegation had met him on visits they had made to Cairo, but they didn't know him very well. Therefore the initial measuring of Mubarak which had taken place during the ceremonies by the three Israeli Ministers was an important point in future developments. I was very curious to find out how they had reacted to Mubarak and what assurances, if any, they had been given about the peace treaty, the peace process, the autonomy negotiations and all the outstanding issues. On the plane that night, Begin was rather taciturn and went off to sleep soon after take-off. I was sitting opposite Shamir and Burg and had a chance to talk to them all the way back. They told me that Mubarak had said all the right things, had made all the right assurances —the Egyptians would stick to everything to which they been committed, there would not be any change in policies towards Israel. Mubarak had said that he was loyal follower of Sadat's and that he would assume responsibility of carrying out his dreams for peace. But both Israelis made the same judgment about him: they did not think that he was up to the task of ruling Egypt. They did not question his sincerity; they wondered about his

abilities. He was a military officer—simple, direct. They thought that Egypt needed to have a “pharaonic” type of leader like Sadat to hold it together because it had tremendous internal and external pressures. Shamir and Burg turned out to be very wrong; Mubarak has proved to be a very solid and successful leader. He is cautious and careful; he is different from Sadat, but perhaps Egypt was ready for a different style from Sadat's. The night of our return, the Israelis were very worried about the change in Egyptian leadership. They were not surprised when, within a relatively short period of time, it became clear that Mubarak didn't want to invest any political capital in trying to move the Camp David process further. He was completely absorbed in assuring that the Israelis would withdraw from Sinai completely by the following Spring; everything else was secondary. He was even more worried about normalization of relations between Egypt and Israel than Sadat had been and about the attitudes of other Arab states toward Egypt.

There was another sad death in October, 1981 although it didn't have the same consequences as Sadat's assassination. On October 16, Moshe Dayan died of a heart attack. He had, for all practical purposes, been out of politics for a while. He had resigned from the Cabinet in the Fall, 1979 when he concluded that Begin would not fulfill the autonomy concept to the same dedication that he, Dayan, had committed himself and that he would not be permitted to exercise the leadership of these negotiations as he had hoped. He tried to run for the Knesset and had formed his own political party. He thought that he would do well; in fact, he only won two seats. So he became a figure of the past and was in his 70s when he passed away. He had been ill for almost two years; he had a cancer operation and had recovered quite well, although not completely. Although his health was poor, he was still active until his death. For Sallie and me, it was a very sad and poignant day when he died; we were very close personally to Dayan and his wife and had spent a lot of time with them, both privately and officially. I always believed that Dayan's restless, creative and unusual mind had been the key to the peace process, although we can't overlook Begin's determination and political judgments. But without Dayan's continual drive to find solutions to impasses, we probably would not have

completed a peace treaty. When we went to his funeral in Nahalal in his old moshav in Galilee it was a very sad ending to an era. To have both Sadat and Dayan pass away in the same month—Carter already having left office and Ezer Weizman having resigned from his office—meant that the Camp David group had pretty much disappeared from power except for Begin. He was the only one left of the original triumvirate, but he had lost his two principal lieutenants. That was another reason why we never succeeded in the Reagan administration in moving forward on the negotiating track. Mubarak was not a Sadat; Begin was no longer the same Begin—he had Arik Sharon instead of Weizman in the Defense Ministry, and Shamir instead of Dayan in the Foreign Ministry; and Reagan didn't have the same sense of commitment to Middle East peace as Carter had. Those personnel changes made for a very different environment. The month of October, 1981 was the end of the peace process for a long time, although we did not want to acknowledge it so at the time.

Q: After Dayan's death on October 16, 1981, what happened next?

LEWIS: Two days later, on Sunday, Sallie and I drove to Nahalal, the Moshav where Dayan was raised and where his oldest son, Udi, still ran the family farm. There we attended Dayan's funeral. There was an official American delegation led by Attorney General French Smith, but Dayan's death was a very personal sad occasion for the Lewises because both Sallie and I were very close to Moshe and his wife, Rahel. Dayan's first wife, Ruth, the mother of his three children, also attended the funeral. The relationship between the two of them was quite strained. The Dayan family has been subjected to a great deal of written scrutiny. Both “yellow” and regular journalism covered it fully; in some sense the Dayans are a star-crossed family. Sallie managed to be good friends with both Ruth and Rahel, which was quite a tribute to her ability to get along with various people. Moshe's death brought all the players together, including two other children—son Ossi, a Bohemian, rebellious actor—and daughter Yael—author, ex-journalist and now an active

left-wing Labor politician in Israel. The cemetery was on a hill among a grove of trees overlooking the Galilee Valley, in which Nahalal lies.

The funeral was attended by the greats of Israel—Prime Minister Begin, Ezer Weizman, who was married to Ruth's sister, Rauma. Dayan and Weizman were brothers-in-law through Moshe's first wife; it was not a comfortable relationship between the two men. I had a number of opportunities to watch that relationship when one was the Foreign Minister and the other the Defense Minister. It was always very puzzling and sad that Dayan, who was considerably older and had been a hero long before Weizman was prominent, never took his brother-in-law very seriously; he considered Weizman as a “fly boy”—a pilot, neer-do-well playboy. Weizman, on the other hand, almost hero-worshiped Dayan; he tried very hard when both were in the Cabinet to work closely with Dayan, only to be tolerated at best; Dayan never concealed his disdain for Weizman—unfairly in my view. The end result was that the Foreign and Defense Ministries didn't work together very well at the staff level primarily because of Dayan's disdain.

In a Jewish funeral, the eldest son reads the Kaddish, the prayer for the dead. Udi, who was very estranged from his father, refused to perform. That was just one of the under-currents present at the funeral that afternoon. Nevertheless, I had a sense sitting on that hillside that part of Israel's history was being buried. I also felt that a lot of the dynamism of the peace process had also passed away. It was a very sad afternoon.

A few days later, Egyptian General Hassan Ali arrived to continue the autonomy negotiations. There had been staff level negotiations before his arrival. Soon thereafter, ministerial level negotiations were convened again. Two ministerial sessions were held during the following month. As I mentioned before, Roy Atherton, our Ambassador to Egypt and I acted as co-chairmen of the U.S. delegation. Later Ambassador Wat Cluverius, who was the head of the U.S. working level team, joined us (he later became Consul General in Jerusalem and now is the head of the MOF (Multi-lateral Observer

Force in the Sinai) in Rome). Only a little progress was made in these sessions and it was clear that all momentum had dissipated after Sadat's death.

At the end of October, the AWACs package, which had been the subject of the bitter political Congressional debate during the summer, was approved. In order to sweeten the blow for the Israelis, the Administration decided to extend some additional assurances that Israel's technological edge would be maintained. I delivered a letter to Begin in late October which reiterated U.S. support for Israel and recommitted the U.S. to maintain the military technological edge over the Arab adversaries. Nevertheless, the Israel Cabinet expressed regrets over the AWAC sale, but ultimately the controversy died out, even though the new Administration took a lot of lumps for having forced the package through Congress over Israel's objection. This was a period of “fawning” over Saudi Arabia. Earlier the Saudis has proposed their eight point peace plan—the Fahd Plan; we had expressed the view that it included some positive signs. Reagan noted that it did include the fact that the Arabs recognized Israel as a sovereign nation to be negotiated with. Of course, that statement did not appear in the Fahd Plan at all; Reagan was merely expressing his impression of the briefings that he had received! That statement gave the Israelis some heartburn. In the meantime, Israeli Ambassador Evron was warning Secretary Haig in Washington that our support of the Fahd Plan would completely sabotage the autonomy negotiations.

During my tour in Israel, as I mentioned earlier, I found that the only way to escape the constant pressure and to find some relaxation was to go scuba diving. I did that in early November when I flew to Sharm el Sheikh for four or five days of terrific diving at the tip of the Sinai. We drove back to Elat. On the way back, we stopped at a famous diving spot called the “Blue Hole” near Dahab. It is huge hole in the reef in the shape of a cookie-cutter, about 100 yards in diameter; from the air it looks like a giant circular hole in the center of the broad, light colored reef along the shore. I am very proud of the dive I took at the “Blue Hole” that day and that is why I am going at some length to describe the environment. With me, was the Embassy's Naval Attach#, Pete Peterson, who was my

frequent diving buddy. He had been a Navy Seal, although as a Seal, he had never done any deep diving; he had mostly dived close to the surface. I had dived to depths considerably deeper than he. Thirty meters (110 feet) is supposed to be the limit for sport divers; in fact, I have gone as deep as 75 meters—well over 200 feet—which is very deep—as a matter of fact, much too deep. Pete had dived primarily between the surface and 20 meters down. With us also was a friend who is an underwater photographer, Jeff Rodman, now well known internationally for his work. He had never dived in the “Blue Hole” but he was an accomplished diver. I had dived there twice before and therefore I led the dive on this occasion. It is a fairly tricky dive and a very exciting one. This was the first time in my life that I had led two more experienced divers. We went down 40 meters into the blue cavern with the hole getting darker and darker. As you approach the bottom, you see the faint outlines of a huge golden arch. As you approach the arch, you see sunlight coming through it. You swim down to 48-50 meters and then you see the opening of the arch; you swim through the arch, through the outside part of the reef and then out into the open sea. The arch is a tunnel that connects the hole and the open sea. It is a very exciting dive. I wouldn't do it now, but it was great fun then. It is a dive that is done frequently, but there have been a number of casualties. About six weeks ago, three Israeli diving instructors were killed diving in the “Blue Hole”; their bodies were found three days later and I don't know the cause of their deaths. It is of course not unknown that experienced divers do crazy things before they dive like drinking beer or diving in the middle of the night by the light of the moon just to show their machismo. If you dive below 35 meters, you can have narcosis, which is like being drunk. You lose your sense of self-control, you lose your orientation, your vision blurs (that has happened to me), you feel totally impervious to any danger and you will take crazy chances as the result of the nitrogen's effect on the brain—it dulls your judgment. That is how people get into trouble; they dive too deep, ignoring rules they know well, then they may have a narcosis attack and lose their sense of judgment—e.g., they will dive down instead of coming up. Equipment failure is a very rare phenomenon. The problems arise usually from very good divers behaving as they

know they shouldn't or from beginners or from divers in very bad physical condition—they get exhausted and are not able to perform as they should.

I have dived off Papua New Guinea and in the Caribbean; there are many interesting places in the world, but the tip of the Sinai is very special—it is one of the top two or three diving areas in the world. It has more varieties of fish and corrals and clearer water than in most other parts of the world. There are bigger fish elsewhere—the Pacific, for example, but the Red Sea has the variety. Diving is what permitted me to live through eight years in Israel; I would not have been able to last that long without it. The opportunity to slip away every two or three months to enjoy a few days of diving made the rest of time bearable; when you dive, you forget everything else. Divers don't discuss politics; they barely know who is the Prime Minister and know little about his views. They discuss diving and fish and it is a great change for anyone in a pressure cooker such as Israel.

I was in Cairo in early November for the last round for a long time of the autonomy talks. The discussions did not make any progress. During the whole month of November, there was a steady drumbeat of concern about Lebanon. The cease-fire between the PLO and the Israelis was holding, as far we could see; there had not been any incursions across the northern border, but there had been an increasing number of attacks on Jews elsewhere. People were slipping across the Jordan border and the Israelis reported them to us as violations of the cease-fire. The difference of opinion on the definition of the cease-fire was becoming increasingly dangerous. We were still trying to put together a multinational force to police the Sinai. The Israelis continued to balk at the idea of European participation in the force because they felt that Camp David had not been supported by Europe as vigorously as it should have. I kept repeatedly arguing with Begin and Shamir, the Foreign Minister, to little avail. November was a complicated period. Yet it seemed to be in, its own way, a deceptive time because matters were progressing normally—there were no great crises, which in itself, was unusual.

At the end of November, the Fez Conference was held in Morocco—an Arab League meeting which expanded further the Fahd Plan, but in fact, weakened it and made it even less interesting to the Israelis. On November 26—Thanksgiving Day—Begin broke his hip in his bathtub, or getting out of his bathtub. He was in considerable pain and had to stay at home for several weeks, bed ridden. He brooded and worried; he became angry. I saw him on a number of occasions in his bedroom. We transacted some business, but he really was not in adequate physical shape particularly in the first couple of weeks to able to focus very long on any subject. This accident had a significant impact on U.S.-Israeli relationships. I left the day after Begin's mishap to escort Foreign Minister Shamir on a visit to Washington. Sharon was there as well, trying to finish that ill-fated “Memorandum of Understanding” on strategic cooperation that he and Weinberger had been drafting for months. It was finally signed on November 30. Shamir went to Washington to meet with Haig, Habib and others to discuss the Fez Plan, the Lebanese issue and the tension created between the two countries by Israel's overflights of Saudi Arabia. The Saudis had deployed tanks and some F-5s at a base near Tabuk in northwest Saudi Arabia, not too distant from Israel. The Israelis were always concerned by what types of planes were stationed at Tabuk because of the very short warning time for Israel that the proximity of the base would provide. Therefore, periodically, without any announcements, the Israeli Air Force would reconnoiter the base and photograph the planes on the base. The Saudis with their AWAC planes were now in a position to detect the Israeli flights, increasing the danger of air encounters because the Saudis might decide to challenge the Israeli flights. We therefore began to intercede with the Israelis to cease these reconnaissance overflights; they felt that they were not harming anybody, but were necessary for their defense. So this issue was on the Washington discussion agenda. Begin angrily rejected the right of the U.S. to raise the issue, although we always made our arguments quite vigorously. Another item for discussion was our continued urging of Israel to permit European countries to participate in the multi-lateral peace keeping force; ultimately, Haig did obtain Israeli agreement after considerable discussion. The Israeli Cabinet insisted that

all European countries that participated would have to formally endorse the Camp David accords and the peace treaty—that was not an unreasonable demand.

While in the United States, I visited Boston to give a speech to the Union of American Hebrew Congregations' annual convention. This group represented the liberal wing of American Judaism. Sallie was with me. My speech was a summary of the history of the peace process to date. I remember the occasion well because while we were in Boston, it was hit with an incredibly large snowstorm, which snowed us in for the next day and a half in our hotel. We did manage to stomp out and use the subway a couple of times, but that was the extent of our ventures. I have never seen Boston or any other city as paralyzed as it was on those days; the only similarity in my experience was a snowstorm in Washington, which had similar effects.

Habib left the U.S. and went to Damascus to try once again to calm the choppy Lebanese waters. He also tried to soften Syrian violent opposition to the peace process between Egypt and Israel. After Syria, he went to Jerusalem, arriving in early December. In the following week, two extraordinary events took place. I was still in the U.S., having finally gotten out of Boston and having gone to New York and seeing some theater—along with giving a speech to the Council on Foreign Relations on the Israeli situation. We flew out of New York, arriving back in Israel on December 13. I faced a big mess immediately. An extraordinary event had taken place on December 6, 1981, which was connected with the build-up prior to the Lebanon War. This episode was also directly related to events that took place upon my departure five years later, which I will describe in detail later in a special section dealing with the long-running confrontation between General Ariel Sharon and me.

When Habib got to Jerusalem, he brought many complaints from Assad concerning Israeli provocations in Lebanon. We were getting increasing evidence of rising tensions between the Palestinians and the Israelis. The cease-fire was still in effect. During early December, my DCM, Bill Brown was in charge of the Embassy. On December 6, there was a meeting

at the Foreign Ministry involving Habib, Morris Draper (Habib's Deputy), Bill Brown, Paul Hare (the Embassy's Political Counselor) as note taker, and Fred Raines, our Military Attach# on one side; and Sharon, the Defense Minister, Abrasha Tamir, the Defense Ministry's chief planner and almost alter-ego, a couple of Israeli military officers, Eytan Ben Tsur, the chief of the North American section of the Foreign Ministry, and Hanan Bar-On, the Deputy Director General of the Foreign Ministry on the Israeli side (Bar-On was the Foreign Ministry official we worked with most closely). There may have been some additional participants, but I have mentioned the key ones. The meeting was held at the Foreign Ministry for convenience because Habib was in Jerusalem and Sharon also was there for some other meeting. Shamir was not involved because he was in Washington and had not yet returned. There have been some suggestions made later that Shamir attended, but I do not believe that to be correct. I was briefed fully upon my return about the meeting by Brown, Hare and Raines of my staff as well as by Habib and Draper. I also read the detailed reporting cables they had sent to Washington.

At the meeting, Sharon launched into a diatribe on events in Lebanon, repeating over and over again that the cease-fire wasn't working and that there had been innumerable violations. Habib argued about the interpretation of the cease-fire; i.e., which activities it covered and which it didn't. At one point, Sharon reared back and said that he wanted to make some things eminently clear. He noted that the U.S. had complained vigorously when the Iraqi nuclear reactor was bombed by the Israelis, even though the U.S. had been clearly warned prior to the event. He then went on to say that he did not wish that there be any more surprises. He said that he was convinced, although the Cabinet might not be, that the solution to the Lebanon problem was to solve it once and for all by driving the PLO out of Lebanon, allowing the government to rule once again over its total country. He continued his presentation, always noting that the ideas were his own and did not have Israeli government approval. His view was that Israel should conduct a major military operation in Lebanon, unless the “violations” ceased. He described in considerable detail what in fact became subsequently the Israeli invasion of Lebanon. It was not an

operational plan; he never mentioned going as far as Beirut, but all the other key elements were presented. It was certainly clear that Sharon had a very large military operation in mind, which would have driven the PLO out of Lebanon. It would have gone quite far north, driving the Syrians north of the highway between Beirut and Damascus and out of South Lebanon. All of these goals were clearly part of Sharon's plan.

Habib and everybody else was thunder-struck by Sharon's plan, although I think our Embassy staff were not quite as surprised, except for the fact that Sharon was being so open about his views. Maury Draper was absolutely stunned. Habib has been quoted as saying, “You flabbergast me”, although that doesn't sound like Habib. What he probably did was to ask some questions such as what the Israelis expected to do with the thousands of Palestinians. Sharon is alleged to have responded, “We'll hand them over to the Lebanese. In any case, we expect to be in Lebanon only for a few days. The Lebanese Christians will take care of them”. Habib reacted to the presentation in very strong terms. He said that the Sharon plan was absolutely out of the question. He said that it should not even be contemplated, particularly at that stage of history. He predicted that the whole region would react, probably starting another war. He was very upset and had angry exchanges with Sharon.

The Foreign Ministry officials who attended the meeting were also astounded. They couldn't imagine that the Minister of Defense would discuss with American representatives a military operation of such scope, which had never even been whispered to the Cabinet. They wrote up their summary of the meeting very carefully and rushed back to the Foreign Ministry. They immediately called Yehuda Ben Meir, who was the Deputy Foreign Minister, who was a good friend of the U.S. and mine. He had been an American citizen; he was a sociologist; he was a member of the Knesset from the National Religious Party. Yehuda was thunder-struck as could be easily imagined. He reported what he had been told to Shamir—that is why I am sure that Shamir did not participate in the Habib-Sharon meeting. Yehuda Ben Meir also briefed his two Religious Party colleagues immediately—Education Minister Hammer and Minister of Interior Burg. Shamir did not react after being

briefed. I feel confident that some one briefed Begin, although there is no documentation which speaks to the issue when and how Begin found out about the meeting. He may have read the Foreign Ministry's summary. Bill Brown, who was the acting ambassador, dispatched an agitated message to the State Department; it had been drafted by Paul Hare. Habib sent a private message to Haig expressing extreme concern about the scope of Sharon's enterprise, even though Sharon had clearly said that the plan was only hypothetical, it was his personal plan and would probably not receive Cabinet approval. In retrospect, it was clear that Sharon had used the meeting with Habib to prepare the Reagan administration for a large Israeli operation in Lebanon which was likely to occur; he was trying to condition us to accept it when it went into effect.

Sharon's subsequent comments on the Lebanon war makes it clear—he made his view clear in the meeting with Habib—that he intended to get the PLO out of Lebanon, thereby safeguarding the northern border, enabling the Lebanese Christians to pacify the country and moving the Syrians out of south Lebanon, sufficiently removed so that they couldn't influence all events in Beirut. In their book on the Lebanon war, Ze'Ev Schiff and Ehud Ya'Ari discuss the Habib-Sharon meeting quite accurately. Schiff is the leading military commentator in Israel. He wrote in 1985 that he had learned about the meeting a few weeks after it had taken place or about the same time that he had gotten his first inkling of the fact that planning for a war in Lebanon was well under way. It is important to note that at the time of the Sharon-Habib meeting, no one in the Cabinet, as far as I know, had any idea of the concept or even that Sharon was about to discuss it.

Q: Was the concept Sharon's own or might it have come from some options presented by Defense Ministry staff?

LEWIS: The concept was Sharon's. There was staff work to support it, but the idea was Sharon's. That is my belief.

In any case, the Habib-Sharon meeting of early December 1981 was an omen of a long diplomatic shadow that would be cast in the future. But there was another event about that time that was more immediately related to U.S.-Israeli relations. Begin, while laying in bed in pain from the broken hip, was listening to the radio and heard President Assad of Syria give a speech in which he rejected the notion of making peace with Zionists, not in a 100 years. Begin brooded about that comment and began to consider that if Syria were never to make peace, Israel should just annex the Golan Heights. The argument went that there would never be any negotiations about the area in any case, and if Assad were going to be so intransigent, why shouldn't Israel proceed with its legal incorporation? I returned to Israel on December 13. The Embassy staff had begun to pick up rumors on Friday, December 11 about something being considered for the Golan. Bill Brown filed a report alerting Washington to these rumors and suggesting the language of a very tough message that he could deliver quickly to the Israeli government before any action could be taken to annex the Heights. In fact, the annexation was announced at a Cabinet meeting on the morning of December 13. Begin actually left his house and this was his first Cabinet meeting after having broken his hip. He surprised everyone in the Cabinet by proposing that Israeli law be extended to the Heights. Technically, that was not the same as annexation but the extension of Israeli law to the area; it was the same formula that was used in 1948 on the status of Jerusalem; that was repeated in 1980 when the Jerusalem law was approved. This legal device has the same effect as annexation, but it is not so named. It theoretically, leaves the door slightly open to subsequent negotiations. The Cabinet was taken aback; Begin was at his most fiery; he denounced Assad. He said that it would be ridiculous not to proceed; it would show the Arabs once and for all that Israel could not be trifled with. At the time, the Golan Heights was occupied territory under military control. There were only 10-12,000 Druze inhabitants from Syrian days in addition to the more recent few thousand Israeli settlers. The Cabinet adopted Begin's proposal. I reached Begin by phone after the Cabinet meeting to attempt (without any formal instructions from Washington) to try to slow him down. It was useless. He was impervious to my arguments. The next day, very quickly before any national debate could

develop, or perhaps more importantly, before the U.S. could respond—which was clearly part of Begin's game plan—Begin's proposal was put before the Knesset. There was a debate and then the Knesset approved the implementing legislation—the law passed all three readings in the same day, which was almost unprecedented. It was approved by 63-21 count. The Labor Party boycotted the vote—they abstained. That was not a very courageous act, but it must be remembered that Labor had been responsible for the Israeli kibbutzim on the Golan. The kibbutz members on the Golan were nearly all Labor supporters. Furthermore, there was a compelling security argument because the Golan was a threat to Israel as shown in the 1950s and 1960s. The Labor Party leaders had always been as tough on the Golan as had the Likud, even though the two parties differed on the West Bank and Gaza. In any case, Labor abstained and did not oppose the Begin proposal because presumably to do so might have left them politically exposed.

The Cabinet and Knesset actions created a firestorm in Washington, as I had warned Begin they would. There was real anger in the White House. Haig felt double-crossed. Meetings were held to decide on a U.S. response. One of the arguments that had been made by Secretary Haig in support of the Israeli “strategic cooperation” concept, which impelled Reagan to ask Weinberger to take on the task of negotiating with the Israelis, was that once such a formal strategic relationship was in being, events such as the bombing of the Iraqi nuclear reactor would not take place; the assumption was that the Israelis would consult fully with us before taking any aggressive actions. The Haig thought had been implied by Begin and Sharon, if not actually expressed. The Israelis had never made any commitment of that kind, at least not in so many words. They never had promised to consult with us before taking any actions, but we had good reasons to infer that the new relationship would be a closer working one and that as strategic allies, we could reasonably expect the Israelis not to surprise us with an action as far reaching as they proposed for the Golan Heights. That was the White House view and the staff there felt completely double-crossed. The Administration tried to think of an appropriate response which would not weaken Israel's defense capabilities but would get Begin's attention.

Finally, Washington decided to suspend implementation of the new “strategic cooperation” agreement, signed only two weeks earlier. The agreement would stay in suspension while a full review of Israeli actions was undertaken with the Israeli government. My friends in Washington said that the ground rules had to be straightened out with Begin so that in the future we would know how to deal with each other. I received a message from Haig, which I was to deliver to Begin in which the suspension was announced. It also raised serious questions about the application of Israeli law on the Golan Heights. The message was polite, but we knew that it would not be well received by Begin. But Washington honestly felt that this kind of message was in order to try to convince Begin that he couldn't take actions of this kind unilaterally and with impunity. The alternative courses of action, such as suspension of military aid, would undermine Israel's security. The policy option chosen was the softest, but clearest message that Begin might understand. Begin had put personal great store in this strategic cooperation agreement.

I called the Prime Minister's office for an appointment. I went to see him, although he was still convalescing after his release from the hospital. He was still in bed and not mobile, although greatly improved from the time of his operation. He still had some pain. I took Paul Hare with me as the note-taker. On December 20, we went to Begin's residence in Jerusalem at 9:30 a.m. When we reached the upstairs bedroom, we were met not only by Begin and his assistant, but also by Sharon, Shamir and a couple of others. They were all glowering. Begin was sitting in a chair with his foot up. He was sitting next to a table covered with papers. By this time, Begin already knew about the suspension because it had been announced in Washington two days earlier. He had plenty of time to consider his reaction. The Haig letter had been sent to Begin earlier. I wanted to make sure that Begin understood that we were not canceling the agreement, but only suspending it pending further discussions. My talking points started with that issue.

When I entered the bedroom, it was clear that Begin was in a lot of pain; his face was drawn. He greeted me very cordially; as always he called me “Sam”. He told me about his physical condition in answer to my question about his health. He discussed his wife, who

was not well. It was an obvious effort on his part to separate his comments on the U.S. action from his relationship with me. His outrage would be with Reagan and Washington. After about five minutes of small talk and pleasantries, he stiffened, he sat up straighter, his face became steely. He reached for the stack of papers on the table and put them on his lap—he never looked at them. Then he began his lecture. He first said, very somberly, “I have, Mr. Ambassador (when he was angry, he always called me “Mr. Ambassador” so that I always knew when I could expect a blast), a very serious, personal private message to President Reagan which I want you to transmit immediately”. So Paul Hare takes out his notebook to record Begin's message. Begin launches into a lecture that lasted about one hour and ten minutes non-stop. His comments were completely extemporaneous. He never looked at a note. He gave a tour de force of Israel's relations with Syria, including all the perfidies that Syria had perpetrated, including the attacks on Israeli territory, the Yom Kippur War and how Israel occupied the Golan Heights in the first place during the 1967 war. He talked about the Israeli casualties, the Holocaust. It was a typical Begin performance when he was in good form; he was at his most scathing. He reviewed the history of “the alliance” with the United States, emphasizing how he and Reagan had reached a most important agreement which would make the U.S. and Israel allies in the future. He then noted that suddenly, without justification, the U.S. had “canceled” the agreement—he insisted on using the word “canceled”. I tried to interrupt to clarify the U.S. action and was just brushed aside. The highlight of the Begin performance was the colorful language used; that became well know subsequently. He said something along these lines' “Do you think that we are teenagers to be punished, slapped on the wrist? Do you think Israel is a vassal state of the United States? Are we just another “banana republic”? Let me tell you, Mr. Ambassador, that this is not Israel!”. He went on this vein for 70 minutes and although I tried, I was unsuccessful in interrupting. At the end, I managed to talk about five-ten minutes, trying to clarify the U.S. action which was a “suspension” pending discussions between the two countries to clarify what each could expect from the other. I pointed out that the Israeli action was a strange surprise to spring on an ally, but Begin wasn't having any of it. So we parted. Paul went with me downstairs so that

we could return as quickly as possible to Tel Aviv to send a reporting cable—Tel Aviv being about an hour's drive from Jerusalem. As we walked down the stairs, I looked into the living room of the residence. The whole Cabinet had assembled there along with the Chief of Staff, the Chief of Intelligence—the high command of the Israeli armed forces. I decided to enter the room and chatted with a couple of them. They did not seem to know why they were there, but they were waiting for Begin to hold a Cabinet meeting. I took my leave, somewhat uneasily. As I left the residence, I ran into a herd of journalists, who had been summoned, as they often were in swarms whenever I came out of the Prime Ministry; there was always a battery of journalists waiting for me. They asked me what had happened and I told them that the Prime Minister had given me a message for President Reagan and that I was on the way to Tel Aviv to send it. Then I left and got into the car with Paul. We started down the hill and had gotten down about half way down when we turned on the news. We heard the Prime Minister's press spokesman giving in English for the foreign media a summary of what Begin had told me, including all the colorful phrases. The briefing was rather lengthy, about fifteen minutes, and very accurate, practically word for word.

The White House was furious at this broadside attack, not only because of its treatment of the U.S. Ambassador, but more importantly for the tone of the attack on the United States. The temperature of the U.S.-Israel relationships plummeted to sub-Arctic levels immediately. I found out later what the Cabinet meeting that I had stumbled into was all about. That is an interesting story in itself. Years after the fact, it became clear that Begin's anger about the suspension of the Memorandum of Agreement resulted first in his lecture to me, but also in the first proposal to the cabinet for a Lebanon invasion. Sharon had asked all the military leaders to attend because he had been asked by Begin to brief the Cabinet on the whole operation called “Big Pines”—the full version that eventually took place. Although in very much greater detail, it was essentially the plan that Sharon had presented to Habib as his “personal” idea two and half weeks earlier. It was however, the

first time the Cabinet had ever heard of it at all, except Shamir who had been briefed by Foreign Ministry staff after the Habib-Sharon meeting.

At the Cabinet meeting, Begin was still angry and livid; he was all fired up. They carried him downstairs to the living room where he chaired the Cabinet meeting. I am told that he asked for Cabinet approval of the Lebanon operation to be initiated at whatever moment seemed to be appropriate in light of PLO actions. The Cabinet was thunder-struck and a number of them asked Sharon a lot of questions. Simcha Erlich, who was the Liberal Deputy Prime Minister and Finance Minister and a well known “dove”, and others, raised serious questions about the whole concept. During the discussions, it was Sharon who defended the operation; Begin apparently just listened to both sides. After a while, it became clear to Begin that he didn't have a majority ready to vote on the proposal. So with a lot of anger, he closed the debate, adjourned the meeting and was taken back upstairs. That was the first of several Israeli Cabinet meetings on the “Big Pines” proposal. Each time, it was deferred or not approved; there was enough opposition to forestall Begin and Sharon from bringing the proposal to a vote lest they seriously splinter the Cabinet. There were at least two or three other occasions between January and June during which inconclusive Cabinet discussions were held. After a while, Begin and Sharon concluded that their Cabinet colleagues were “weak-kneed, lily-livered faint hearts” who could not be persuaded to accept the total proposal. At that stage, Sharon recast the nature of the operation and convinced Begin that the Israelis needed only to project their force 50 kilometers into Lebanon to clean out the PLO artillery and Katusha rockets; thereafter, the Cabinet discussion until the war started was about a much smaller and less frightening operation than had been originally presented. It became, for discussion purposes, only an incursion, slightly larger than the one that took place in 1978.

Not only was the U.S. angry about the substance of his lecture, but I was personally furious at Begin for the manner in which he handled the “private” message to Reagan including a serious breach of diplomatic protocol by giving me a message that had be transmitted “immediately” when in fact the press was to be briefed before I could even

return to Tel Aviv. I should add parenthetically that the mechanics used by Begin tells us something about the Prime Minister's extraordinary memory. I understood later that before the “Big Pines” briefing, Begin started the Cabinet meeting by recounting, from memory and without notes, precisely what he had said to me upstairs. His lecture to me was in English; his description of events to the Cabinet was in Hebrew. His press secretary made notes of his comments to the Cabinet, went outside to brief the press in English, and despite the double-translation, the press got almost a verbatim version of what I had heard. It was a technically extraordinary feat. In any case, I was thoroughly angry with Begin about the way he had toyed with me and the United States.

Senator Percy happened to visit Israel right after Christmas. Percy had been briefed on recent events, had met with Foreign Ministry staff and was greatly concerned with the drift of the situation, particularly about the cooling of U.S.-Israel relations. At the same time, he was also angry with Begin and the Israelis as we all were. Moshe Arens who was to be the Israeli Ambassador in Washington hosted a dinner for Percy on the night of December 29. Before that dinner, I took Percy to see Begin at the latter's residence. They met for more than an hour with me essentially taking notes. Toward the end, Percy, while trying to stay cordial, was attempting to convince Begin that he needed to take into greater account, U.S.—both administration and Congressional—feelings in matters such as the recent events. When Percy finished, I said, “Mr. Prime Minister, there is something that I wanted to talk to you about before we leave. It concerns me personally”. I then really laid him out for the handling of the “urgent and private” message to the President. I described in unmistakable terms what normal diplomatic practices were and how he had violated them. I told him that I felt that I had been treated like an idiot by his performance. For the only time in my recollection of my relationship with Begin, he apologized; he really was quite contrite. He said he had never considered events in that light; it had never crossed his mind that he was violating diplomatic protocol. He was so intent on getting his point across publicly in the most dramatic manner that he just didn't consider the potential negatives.

He was so contrite, which was so unlike Begin, that I will never forget it. Percy was the only witness.

1981 ended with U.S.-Israel relationships in a deep freeze.

Q: That brings us to January 1, 1982. What happened next?

LEWIS: As the New Year dawned, I received a message requesting that I return to Washington for consultations. Our Ambassador to Egypt, Roy Atherton, received a similar request. We were to return to the U.S. to discuss what could be done about the autonomy negotiations and the peace process. I was also to discuss the perilous state of U.S.-Israel relations. I returned on Sunday, January 3. I spent all day Monday in a series of meetings with the NEA Assistant Secretary, Nick Veliotes, and his staff. We discussed various ways to re-start the autonomy negotiations which had been postponed since the November round at the Israeli request. By this time, it was clear that both Israel and Egypt were far more preoccupied with the completion of the peace treaty. Egypt was especially concerned with the final withdrawal of Israeli forces from the Sinai by the end of April as provided by the treaty. The autonomy talks were of second priority. The U.S. administration, and Secretary Haig specifically, had not yet completely abandoned the notion that the Camp David process should be pushed. He was of the opinion, however, that the focus would have to be on the peace treaty and the withdrawal of Israeli forces, although he also would have liked to keep the autonomy talks moving. He said that he would visit Mubarak and Begin to see whether he couldn't get the two parties to continue their negotiations, particularly the Israelis. I had discussions with Haig, the White House staff, the Pentagon, CIA and other places in Washington. I was principally interested in getting a sense of the inter-agency view of Israel at that stage. Everybody was mad at the Israelis because of the Golan affair and Begin's comments about the United States. At the same time, there was rising concern about Israeli plans for Lebanon. Habib's reports on his conversation with Sharon had been taken very seriously in Washington. No one,

however, had any idea about slowing Israel's momentum; the Palestinians were restive. The situation was very tense.

In response to a question on January 9, the Department's press spokes-person said that we were unwilling to reestablish strategic cooperation with Israel because of the Golan Heights matter. We wanted clarification of the situation before we would end the suspension of the agreement. Haig left for the region the following day. He first visited Cairo, where he said publicly that Mubarak had given him a clear and firm commitment to intensify efforts to reach agreement on the autonomy talks. I later was given to understand from Haig, via Harvey Sickerman, his special assistant who was with the Secretary, that in fact when Haig left Cairo, he knew from Mubarak that the Egyptians wanted to put the autonomy talks on ice; they wanted to concentrate on getting the Israelis out of the Sinai. Haig's comments were actually a smokescreen.

When Haig reached Israel on January 14, he met with Begin, Sharon, Shamir and others. In his meeting with Begin, there was some discussion of the autonomy talks. The Israelis were much more anxious to keep them going than the Egyptians; they pressed Haig to urge Mubarak to join in. They wanted us to intervene on their behalf with Mubarak so that the Egyptians would make a high level commitment to the autonomy talks. But Mubarak was elusive; he had other more important issues to attend.

The main subject of the Haig visit was Israel's intentions toward Lebanon and associated with that, what was to be done about the Golan Heights. The meetings were not entirely satisfactory on either subject, but Begin did give some assurances that Israel would not attack anyone in Lebanon without clear provocation. He urged the U.S. to do everything possible to make the cease-fire effective and to warn the Syrians not to complicate matters. When Haig returned to Washington at the end of January, he did tell the press that he didn't believe that any autonomy agreement would be concluded in the near future. He did not give any indication of a diminished U.S. interest in the issue. This period was a busy time for the Embassy. There were a lot of visitors—Congressional and others.

Toward the end of January, Haig decided that he would make one more trip to the region. He asked Atherton, Cluverius and me to meet him in Geneva, prior to his arrival in the region. So on January 26, I flew to Switzerland and met that evening with the assembled group. The next morning, I flew back to Israel with the Secretary and his party which included Richard Fairbanks, the to-be appointed U.S. representative to the autonomy negotiations. Fairbanks had been the Assistant Secretary for Congressional Affairs and was well connected politically with the Reagan team. I thought at the time that he was a strange choice to replace Phil Habib; he had little experience; he was a lawyer; he was active, smart, self-confident, but no Middle East experience and little diplomatic experience. I learned much, much later that Fairbanks' appointment, although somewhat cynical, was very sensible. Haig knew nothing was going to happen on the autonomy talks for many months, but he didn't want to admit that the process was dead because that might create tensions between Israel and Egypt. He knew Mubarak didn't want any action and that Begin was increasingly preoccupied by other issues such as Lebanon and Syria. Fairbanks was appointed essentially as a holding action, keeping the position as negotiator filled, and to tour around the region periodically to give the appearance of diplomatic action. It was never intended to be a serious appointment. Nevertheless, Fairbanks was with the Secretary on his January, 1982 trip; it was an opportunity for the Secretary to introduce him to the Israeli and the Egyptians. That would give him some status. Fairbanks was insecure and knew that he was not equipped for the job, but he played the role adequately, particularly since little was expected of him.

Towards the end of January, troubles erupted in Syria. Assad's forces were attacked by Muslim fundamentalists in a number of cities. These were serious terrorist-guerrilla operations against the Syrian regime. The end result was that in a matter of a few weeks, Assad sent the Army into Homs, Hama and Aleppo. The Army shelled these towns and in Hama especially it leveled the town. In the process, according to the information we received, 20-25,000 people were killed by the Syrian Army—mostly, if not all, women and children—the families of the Muslims. The Muslim Brotherhood was effectively squashed

and their rebellion was over. The cities became ghost towns; they have never been rebuilt in the same way. It was an excellent illustration on how to extinguish a rebellion with cold-blooded brutality. Assad was in very bad health at the time and his regime was quite shaky, but he held on tenaciously. The Israelis took very careful note of Assad's action and later made prominent mention of the lack of international reaction to this brutality in contrast to the international comments on Israeli behavior in the West Bank and Gaza.

Fairbanks was not formally appointed as the U.S. representative until the Haig party returned to Washington. Mubarak went to Washington in early February for reassurance that we would insist that the peace treaty would be fully implemented. There was an increasing amount of nervousness in Egypt that Israel, in the final analysis, would refuse to withdraw completely from the Sinai. Indeed, Sharon had been making suggestions along these lines, which made the Egyptians very nervous. In mid-February, Fairbanks made his first official visit to Israel. It was very formal and little was accomplished. He did test the waters.

Q: Who supported Fairbanks?

LEWIS: He had the same team that Habib had been working with. In the absence of any active negotiations, Fairbanks went around and consulted, trying to find any means to get the autonomy negotiation started again. Everybody was polite, but no one really cared. There were still at this time a lot of exchanges between Cairo and Jerusalem; Shamir and Sharon both went back and forth. There were a lot of efforts being made to agree on the final withdrawal details.

In early February, Sallie and I visited Jordan at the invitation of Dick Viets, our Ambassador in Amman. He had been my first DCM in Tel Aviv (1977-79). It gave me an opportunity to become better acquainted with the Jordanians; I had been there once before when Tom Pickering was Ambassador. I again found King Hussein and his people very eager to talk to me about the Israelis; the Jordanians were always anxious to know

what the Israeli leadership was like and what it thought. I had a long lunch with the King and General [Sharif Zaid] bin Shakir and later I met with the Crown Prince and other Jordanian leaders. They were very nervous about events in Israel and particularly about Israeli intentions in Lebanon. The King was convinced that a plot was being hatched which would include an attack on the Palestinians which would once again complicate his life by driving some of them back into Jordan; in light of the Jordan-PLO history, that was a troublesome prospect. He wanted to know to what extent the Sinai withdrawal was likely to take place, although he did indicate some skepticism. All Jordanians were suspicious of Israeli intentions, particularly on withdrawal.

Sometime in February, Shamir had visited Cairo with the express intent on making arrangements for a Mubarak visit to Israel. He had never been there and the Israelis were anxious to expose him to their country. Unfortunately—I believe at Begin's initiative—the Israelis assumed that if the President of Egypt would come to Israel, he would come on an official visit and would visit Jerusalem. Sadat had set that precedent, but Mubarak was too faint-hearted and was greatly concerned by Arab reactions. Therefore, he postponed the trip making his reasons eminently clear—he did not use some vague diplomatic formulations, which would have been much wiser. Instead, he made it clear that he would not come to Jerusalem. Once the issue had been raised, the anti-Egyptians and those who were sensitive to Jerusalem's status, immediately advised Begin that no one should be welcomed in Israel on an official visit unless they visit Jerusalem. Begin fully agreed. In effect, they shot themselves in the foot by insisting on a Jerusalem visit, thereby eliminating any possibility of a Mubarak visit, which still hasn't taken place although we are now in 1991. This issue remains a very sore subject between Israel and Egypt.

The spring of 1982 was filled with disagreements on the cease-fire in Lebanon—its extent and application. We continued to try to smooth matters over and to stave off trouble. There were an increasing number of incidents outside of Israel between Palestinians elements and Jews, with each one being considered by Israel as a major violation. The Israeli press increasingly beat the war drums, using each one of these “major violations” as an

excuse for the policy of cleaning out the threats from South Lebanon. On April 3, an Israeli diplomat, Jacob Bar-Simenthal was assassinated in Paris; the PLO was blamed. That spring, there was also an attack on a Jewish synagogue in Paris during which a number of people were killed. These incidents did inflame Israeli views toward the PLO. Cap Weinberger had planned a trip to Israel during this time, but on April 5, Shamir gave a very fiery speech at Bar-Simenthal's funeral, saying that Israel would strike at the PLO without reservations if these acts of terrorism did not cease; the next day, Weinberger canceled his trip, although I don't know how closely the two events were connected. State had recommended the cancellation because it was felt that Weinberger's presence in Israel could only complicate matters. Throughout April, we were increasingly focusing on the final Sinai withdrawal arrangements, which had become more difficult with every passing day. Sharon was becoming more and more obstreperous; he was accusing the Egyptians of not fulfilling all of their treaty obligations. Both Begin and he were discussing publicly the need for Egypt to meet all of its commitments before Israel met all of its. A “chicken” game was developing and we were extremely concerned that the whole treaty would fall apart at the last minute because the Israelis would not complete their withdrawal. In retrospect, we were probably overly concerned; I am convinced that Begin never had the slightest doubt about fulfilling Israel's treaty commitments, but he was determined to squeeze as much out of the Egyptians as he could; it was clear that they were not meeting all of their obligations. Begin was a tough bargainer and may have bluffed us into being more concerned than we needed to be. He certainly did worry us; we were also concerned about developments in Lebanon which appeared to be increasingly likely to lead to a major clash; so we had two major concerns on our hands simultaneously—the situation in the area could have been greatly upset by either, not to mention both. We had a scare in mid-April when we spotted Israeli troop movements near the Lebanon border; we had intelligence warnings all the time. I went to see Begin to show our concerns and he assured me that no decision had been made to attack Palestinian targets; that did not mean that such a decision might not be made. The atmosphere was tense; I had repeated meetings with Begin and Sharon—sometimes together. Since December, Sharon had become increasingly difficult to deal

with; he was abusive; he didn't listen; he made no effort to try to resolve real or perceived problems; he was defiant; essentially, he was sticking his thumb in our eyes every time he got a chance. He kept repeating, “Don't think we will surprise you; if these Palestinian acts continue, we will clean them out”. He was in fact making his view clear that we would have to swallow what ever Israel decided to do. Both Washington and I continued to send warnings, argued and rebutted, although I must say that the Embassy was not getting a lot stern messages from Washington to support our position. I believe that Haig had concluded as early as January/February that at some point, the Israelis would be sufficiently provoked that they would invade Lebanon and clobber the Palestinians. Haig didn't really like the PLO and therefore may have considered the Israelis' idea not so bad.

In the middle of April, another unanticipated event occurred which raised tensions a great deal. An American-Israeli, Aaron Harry Goodman, went crazy and shot his way up unto the Dome of the Rock. He was an Israeli soldier. He killed two Arab guards, wounded a number of worshipers. There were protests during which rocks were thrown. It was a terrible mess. Goodman was indeed out of his mind. The Arab world seized the event as an opportunity to show how unreliable Israel was in safeguarding the Temple Mount. Tensions rose drastically. We made some tough public statements in Washington, but we soon understood that the act was that of a madman. No one else seemed or wanted to understand that. There was a major debate in the Security Council. Israel was condemned by all sides, which put us in the position of both defending and denouncing Israel. On April 12, Nick Veliotes, who was in Israel on a brief visit, returned to Washington and on his recommendation, the Administration decided to appoint Deputy Secretary Walter Stoessel as a kind of trouble shooter. He was to go to Israel and Egypt to try to ease some of the tensions that were generated by the Israeli retreat from the Sinai. His appointment was intended to get us over this rough period because he was a high level official.

The problem was that Cairo was dragging its feet on the treaty violations that Israel alleged; some in Israel were talking about not completing the Sinai withdrawal. Stoessel's job was to mediate and to make sure that the complete withdrawal would take place. He

had never been involved in Middle East affairs, but was an old pro, a fine person and an experienced diplomat. He was very gracious, proper and formal, while warm at the same time. When he came to the region, he essentially put himself in Roy Atherton's and my hands. We worked very closely with him during the following couple of weeks. He met with Begin, who took a liking to him. Stoessel essentially shuttled between Cairo and Jerusalem. During his visit, we worked out some language for an informal memorandum of understanding, covering the points at issue. That documented was negotiated with both sides and became a cover for the political leadership. It in effect made the United States the guarantor of all that was to happen. Begin over-ruled Sharon, who was arguing that complete withdrawal be delayed. Begin, as I said, had complete withdrawal in mind all along, but needed a senior American mediator to help him in his internal arguments. Sharon had raised so much fuss about these alleged treaty violations that Begin needed this help. Many of Sharon's allegations were insignificant in any case, but he seemed determined to thwart the treaty, although I do not know why. It may have gone back to the questions which stalled the Taba negotiations for so long. Sharon and others, including Begin, were always very unhappy about the fact that at Camp David the Israelis had to agree to total withdrawal from the Sinai. They gave up airfields and settlements near the border. They had to give up the last inch of territory. There was considerable criticism in Israel of Begin and Sharon and the administration after Camp David for accepting total withdrawal because that policy might set a precedent for the Syrians and the Golan Heights and for the Jordanians and the Palestinians and the West Bank. The argument went that once it was agreed to withdraw entirely from the Sinai, then there could be no compromises for any other occupied territories. Sharon apparently had bought that argument fully and was therefore determined not to evacuate the Sinai completely. Begin was also sympathetic to the argument, but was ultimately governed by a sense of honor which bound him to a treaty that he had signed. Both would have preferred to find a way not to return all of the Sinai, even if they were just small pieces that were under dispute;. they thought that might be helpful later when other agreements had to be negotiated with other Arab countries. That is how the Taba affair began. Sharon staked out about 14

different points along the demarcation line where there was disagreement between Israel and Egypt on where the boundary should be. Sharon was determined not to give on any of these areas at issue. Ultimately, the negotiators put off the settlement of these border disputes; that allowed the withdrawal to be completed. That was Stoessel's achievement. It was hard work, late nights; we worked in the Consul General's offices in Jerusalem since we were working with the Israelis in Jerusalem and needed a secure phone to talk to Atherton in Cairo. At one point we had the Israeli negotiators, including Eli Rubenstein and David Kimche, come to the Consulate General which is something that they had never done. The Israeli government has never recognized the existence of that Consulate General and therefore is reluctant to deal with it at all. That attitude stemmed from the Corpus Separatum concept of 1948 which suggested that we didn't recognize Jerusalem as the capital of Israel; that is why our Embassy is in Tel Aviv. That concept created great “angst” for the Israelis; they were unhappy that our representation in Jerusalem was a Consulate General and not an Embassy; they have never quite recognized the existence of our representation. But in 1982, the Israelis were so anxious to get the withdrawal issue resolved by April 25 that their Civil Servants—the professionals with whom we worked closely and well—actually came to the Consulate General for the first time. Not only did they visit the CG's residence, but they actually went upstairs to the offices and were present as we spoke over secure lines to Cairo—just as the Egyptians were with Roy at the other end of the line. At that point, Stoessel was in Cairo, hammering out the language on the informal memorandum that was to serve as the bridge for withdrawal. The Israelis were very curious about the Consulate General; what it was like, how it looked. They had never been inside. They admitted that it had never occurred to them that they would be there; sometimes diplomatic requirements must override political sensitivities.

The Stoessel shuttles were completed on the night before the final withdrawal as to take place, which was April 25. Stoessel had returned from Cairo at 1 a.m. on the morning of the 25th. He slept in Jerusalem for about four hours and had his first meeting of the day at 7:30 a.m. I met him there having driven up from Tel Aviv early that morning. We met

with Begin at 8 a.m.; Stoessel had a t#te-#-t#te with Begin which was important to the Prime Minister because it gave an impression to his political colleagues that there had been a private message for him from the Egyptians—which in fact there hadn't been. But it helped him to close the loop in the Cabinet. The private meeting was followed by a Cabinet meeting with Sharon et al. There had to be a signing ceremony for the document that closed the Sinai withdrawal chapter which dealt with how the disputed areas were going to be handled. The Egyptian Ambassador to Israel, Saad Mortada, had been authorized to sign on behalf of his country so that the signing could take place in Israel. The ceremony which was to take place on the 25th kept being delayed; around 1 p.m. we sent the Israelis' final text to Atherton in Cairo. We then waited for Egyptian approval; withdrawal would not start until the document had been approved by all parties. The 25th passed and we still didn't have the Egyptians' reply. Technically, the peace treaty had been violated, which is something we all wanted to avoid—except maybe Sharon. So we moved the clock back as is often done in international conferences. Eventually, the Egyptians replied positively and the Ambassador was authorized to sign the document. Shamir was spending that night at the Plaza Hotel; we, the Americans and Ambassador Mortada, took the document to the hotel from the American Consulate General where we had all been waiting. Shamir was asleep; so Mortada signed and left the paper with us to get Shamir's signature! The Egyptian Ambassador was a very cooperative diplomat. At 1 a.m., we did get Shamir's signature although it was dated April 25. We then turned the clocks back to their right times. Stoessel flew back to Washington and the Israelis began their withdrawal from the Sinai. But the whole episode was a cliff-hanger.

One of the most difficult parts of the withdrawal was the movement of the Israeli settlers from the Sinai. That was one of the more dramatic episodes of the whole affair. Israeli TV gave it full coverage. Sharon, as Defense Minister, had to send the Army to drag the settlers, one by one, away from their homes and back into Israeli territory. They fought like tigers, attacking their own soldiers who had to use foam; all of this appeared on TV. Many settlers from the West Bank went down to the Yammit—a settlement in the Sinai—to help

the people there to defend themselves from the Israeli army. Much of the fighting stemmed from the provocative actions of the West Bank fanatics. It reminded me very much of the worst scenes we had in this country during the anti-Vietnam demonstrations. It was terribly traumatic for an Israeli Army to be attacked and to attack some of the finest Israeli youths, who were all wearing their yarmulkes. The pictures had a great psychological effect on the Israeli population. It seared the Israelis' public soul; I believe it was calculated to do so. The leaders of the groups that defended Yammit were cynically determined to make the withdrawal of the settlers so painful to the government and the public that it could never be repeated on the West Bank or other areas if withdrawal would be required from those areas in the future. It did have that effect; the forced withdrawal and the subsequent demolition of Yammit by the Israeli Army were not soon forgotten and is still remembered today. Sharon insisted on the destruction of the settlement, despite the fact that the Egyptians had indicated a willingness to pay for the buildings. Sharon spuriously argued that it was too close to the border and that it would be much safer to have just a ruin there so that it could not become a terrorist base in the future. Sharon rejected the Egyptians' offer and Begin for some reason supported him. Yammit was an exception; the settlements further south along the Sinai coast were turned over to the Egyptians intact and due compensation was paid. Yammit was turned over in ruins, after the population had been dragged out screaming and kicking. But it had the effect that Sharon hoped to create. Today, Israeli public sentiment about forced evacuation is governed by its memory of Yammit. I doubt whether anything like it will ever be repeated. There may be voluntary evacuations, but no forced ones, especially if the Army is required.

Otherwise, the evacuation of the Sinai went very smoothly. The pullback was executed on schedule; all the detailed agreements were followed to the letter. Parenthetically, at about this time, Begin took a couple of demonstrative steps which in fact said that Israel had withdrawn this time, but would never do it again. For example, he gave a speech in the Knesset on May 3 in which he said that after the interim period specified by the Camp David agreements, Israel would assert its claims for sovereignty to other

territories as authorized by the agreements. He was putting all on notice that Sinai was not a precedent for other occupied territories. The Knesset voted 58-54 in favor of a Begin proposal which opposed any dismantling of settlements which might result from future peace negotiations. The Knesset also approved Begin's proposal that after the interim period Israeli sovereignty should be extended to the occupied territories. That just a demonstration of Begin's defiance and bitterness about the Sinai withdrawal; the action had an effect on the Egyptians and other Arabs. The Cabinet passed a resolution which rejected any efforts not to hold future autonomy talks in Jerusalem—the Israeli position being that if they were to be held in Cairo, they should also be held in Jerusalem, not in Herzliyya or other cities. That just increased the difficulties of having autonomy talks in the future.

These actions were just part of a large Israeli campaign to minimize the Sinai withdrawal and harden the Israeli position on other matters. It was driven by the bitterness and frustration felt by the Israeli leaders. It certainly made it clear to Egypt that the chances of completing the Camp David accords were very slim, if at all. Egypt got the Sinai back, but the Israelis were making it clear that it was not a precedent for the West Bank or the Golan. That was the tacit statement being sent by these statements.

On May 21, Sharon went to Washington. This was the climactic moment before the Lebanon war. It was the last chance for us to block the invasion. We now know that during the preceding three months, as I have said, Begin and Sharon had brought the Lebanon plan before the Cabinet at least a couple of times, but did not obtain a consensus. Then Sharon laid before the cabinet the more modest plan, which called only for an incursion to a depth of fifty kilometers, to eliminate the Katusha rockets, which were indeed a threat to the Israeli towns close to the northern border. The Cabinet was lulled into approving that “limited” operation as necessary. It left the timing of the operation to Begin and Sharon, presumably depending on further Palestinian incursions. But the gun was cocked when Sharon arrived in Washington. It had not been fired yet. Sharon's purpose for the visit was to sound out Haig and to make an assessment of possible U.S. reaction, which he was to

report to Begin upon his return. The question was, “Could Israel “get away” with it without any massive American reaction?”. I went back to Washington on May 24 to participate in the Sharon meetings; I did not assume that the meetings would go smoothly. I had long before concluded that the Lebanon war was one that was just waiting to take place. The chances increased with every Palestinian attack.

But I had never fully understood how committed Sharon was to his original plan. All the press leaks, of which there were many, discussed only the more modest plan. Our intelligence had not picked up any indication that the press was not correct. We knew that the Cabinet was divided, with a number of Ministers opposing any Lebanon operation.

While in Washington, I met with Charlie Hill, Larry Eagleburger, Nick Veliotes, and Secretary Haig to discuss how Sharon might be handled. Sharon had a meeting with Weinberger in the morning, which was a stand off—very formal, but with little substance. In the afternoon of May 25, we met in the Secretary's conference room on the Seventh Floor. Sharon made a presentation of his bellicose views of the Lebanon situation—the Palestinian threat, Israel's unwillingness to allow further violations of the cease-fire, Israel's interpretation of the cease-fire. Sharon made the same statements that had been made several times previously, “We are not going to surprise you. We are putting the U.S. on notice. We are not looking for trouble, but we can't accept current conditions much longer. So don't be surprised if we respond in a massive way to these dastardly attacks”. Haig clearly followed the line that we had agreed upon. Sharon had taken the maps out so that he could show what might happen if the Palestinians didn't desist. The maps of course only showed the southern Lebanon area. Haig repeatedly said that we considered the situation very dangerous; that we did not consider the cease-fire to have been violated; we believed that Israel had a legitimate right to self-defense, but that international sentiment had to be considered. Haig's view was, which I believe was supported by Reagan, that any country had the right to self-defense. The U.S. would therefore not tell Israel that it couldn't do so, preemptively if necessary, although he didn't use that phrase. But all actions and reactions had to be weighed against a framework of proportionality. Haig

emphasized that if Israel were threatened or actually attacked, its response would have to have international understanding that it was proportionate. That was the central message to Sharon, which was given several times during the meeting. Sharon was never told that Israel could not or must not strike at the PLO, but he certainly should have understood that anything like we now know he was planning was totally unacceptable. The conclusion that Ze'Ev Schiff—a writer—and others drew—namely that Sharon had gotten a green light—was incorrect. One might argue that he got an amber light, but certainly not a green light, at least not while I was present. Unfortunately after this meeting, Haig met privately with Sharon. I have to assume that the Secretary used the same line. Although it is conceivable that there might have been some other nuances, I find it hard to believe. Haig may have shown more sympathy for Israel's dilemma in private because he was in fact sympathetic to Israel's problems with the PLO and the Syrians.

After the meeting, Veliotes and I met with Hill and agreed that the Secretary had not delivered the message in sufficiently tough terms. For us, it raised a serious question on how Sharon would describe the meeting to Begin after his return to Israel. When we had a chance to meet with Haig, we suggested that he write a letter to Begin stating in clear terms what the U.S. position was, so that Sharon's report couldn't be distorted. Nick and I drafted such a letter which Haig signed and I carried back to Israel. The letter was very clear; it followed the policy that had been given to Sharon in good strong terms. Subsequently, from a number of sources, we found out that when Sharon got back he went to see Begin and reported that the Americans would not bother Israel and that Israel should proceed to do what it had to do. The U.S. would make some noise, but wouldn't take any adverse actions. We would swallow Israel's attack. When Begin read Haig's letter, he had Sharon's oral report and therefore leaned to Sharon's interpretation. Objectively, one would have to conclude that at this stage, the only way Begin and Sharon could have been dissuaded from their venture would have been for Reagan to write a very tough letter which would not have left any doubt in any one's mind that the U.S. would react forcefully and strenuously if Israel invaded Lebanon. Such a letter would have had to

convey clearly that if such event would occur, the U.S. would suspend all assistance, etc.; in fact, it would have had to contain a real ultimatum of the kind we have never delivered to Israel, even during the Lebanon war. I did deliver one ultimatum to Begin at a later point after the war had begun to warn about making any further attacks on the Syrians. It was, however, written in very polite language and didn't include any specific threat beyond the general one that our relationships would be adversely effected, which carried some meaning, but lacked specificity. Even an ultimatum of that kind probably would not have been sufficient in May, 1982; there was too much momentum behind Sharon's operation. If we had been willing, we might have sent a real red light, but it was not realistic to expect that, given the U.S. politics, the history and the relationship. It was not the kind of message that any American President, at least since Eisenhower in 1956, had ever given Israel and may never do so. In any case, Sharon returned to Israel and matters unraveled quickly. I returned on May 29 and delivered the letter. Begin read it and said he understood, but reiterated the standard arguments about the PLO increasing threat which could not be tolerated much longer.

On June 4, Shlomo Argov, the Israeli Charg# d'Affaires in London, was attacked by an assassin, shot in the head and almost killed. He is still alive, but in a vegetable state. It was a very sad event. The PLO denied all responsibility; the slim evidence that does exist suggests that the assassin probably belonged to another Palestinian group—an extremist gang like Abu Nidal—and not the main line PLO. But it was certainly a Palestinian attack. On the next day, the Israelis bombed Beirut and the PLO headquarters very heavily with quite a few deaths. Then PLO signed its own death warrant. Arafat, despite a considerable number of warnings not to provoke the Israelis, apparently felt he had no option because of his honor and the morale of his men. He ordered his men to fire on Kiryat Shimona and other northern settlements with Katusha rockets and artillery. That caused retaliatory Israeli air strikes; the PLO then increased their counter artillery fire. I must say that I have never understood what might have been going through Arafat's mind at this moment. It was clear by June 4 and 5 that Israel was just waiting for an excuse to invade Lebanon.

Nevertheless, the PLO responded in such a way to make an invasion inevitable—it may have been that anyway, but the PLO through its actions made it a certainty. The invasion began on June 6. That was the beginning of the Lebanon war, a war which didn't reflect well on anybody—not on the Israelis, not on the PLO, not terribly well on the U.S.. We knew it was coming, we tried to stop it, but our efforts were not sufficiently threatening. They were not halfhearted, but they were inadequate for the challenge—no major and very tough ultimatums. We couldn't put any breaks on the PLO. The Lebanon war was a tragedy for all concerned—the Palestinians, the Lebanese and for Israel. It led to a national crisis which in many ways has never been resolved.

Q: How did Shultz become secretary of State?

LEWIS: At the time of Haig's resignation, Shultz was teaching at the University of Chicago. He had been a member of Nixon's Cabinet—Secretary of Labor, Secretary of Treasury and Director of OMB. He had been considered for Secretary of State at the beginning of the Reagan administration. There was a story, which I consider fairly credible, that Shultz had been selected to be Secretary upon the recommendations of Reagan's “kitchen cabinet”. Reagan had called Shultz and offered him a Cabinet position, but apparently was quite vague about which job it was. Shultz, based on press leaks and other rumors, assumed that Reagan was referring to Secretary of Treasury or some other position in the economic sphere. That didn't interest him, so he turned down the offer politely without being aware that it was the Secretary of State position that he was refusing. That is how Haig became Secretary of State. There are several people who give credence to this story although I don't have any first hand knowledge about it. In any case, Shultz was well known commodity in Washington. He was an excellent choice. He was one that I eventually became to regard very highly and to work with easily. I also had a good working relationship with Al Haig; in fact, I think that he was a better Secretary of State than history has credited him so far. His personal style just didn't fit in with the Reagan team; Haig was his own worst enemy in the way he tried to exert his own leadership. That did not fit with a management style which was not very clear about responsibilities; the White House staff

could not accept some one who tried to assert his primacy over an area of responsibility as Haig was accustomed to doing.

In any case, by early July, 1982 I was back in Israel after two trips to Washington in June, one with Begin. Haig was trying to run Middle East policy from his house as Shultz hadn't yet been sworn in and Haig was still technically in the job. Shultz was finally appointed in mid July. We had problems in New York in the UN Security Council which was considering resolutions calling for PLO limited withdrawal from Beirut and for Israeli forces from Lebanon. The U.S. vetoed such resolutions because we were, at that stage, still supporting the Israeli contention that the PLO had to leave Lebanon before a modicum of order could be restored to the area. The news out of Beirut suggested a very nasty situation. The press was hammering the U.S. administration, accusing it of having approved the Israeli invasion. On June 30, at a press conference, Reagan denied that rumor, even while the Israelis launched an attack on West Beirut from a distance with artillery shells. The President added however that we agreed with the Israeli position that all PLO forces had to withdraw from Lebanon. The Israelis had told us repeatedly that they did not wish to enter West Beirut and wished that we would find some way to force the PLO to withdraw. There was an increasing level of discussion about the desirability of an international peace keeping force to enforce the cease-fire.

Q: Wouldn't that not have required a larger force than is usually dispatched?

LEWIS: Of course. There wasn't much enthusiasm for the idea anywhere. There was already a UN force in south Lebanon—UNIFIL. Some suggested re-deploying UNIFIL to the Beirut area to separate the combatants. The UN certainly didn't leap at that suggestion because it didn't feel it would get sufficient cooperation from either side. In Beirut, the fighting had come to a stalemate because the Israeli shelling was not achieving the objective of forcing the PLO out. The PLO was well dug in and it was increasingly apparent that something more had to be done to root the PLO out. The Israeli Army always had some reservations about entering West Beirut, as I noted earlier. It did not cherish the

prospect of urban warfare even though it had handily defeated the PLO in the previous few weeks even though the PLO forces fought more tenaciously than expected.

Morris Draper, then the Deputy Assistant Secretary in the Bureau for Near East Affairs responsible for Israel-Lebanon-Syria geographic area, had been working for the past year as Phil Habib's alter ego. Draper was in Beirut in July trying to work with the Lebanese government to persuade the PLO to evacuate. Habib may have been there as well; the two worked together at times and separately at others. I believe that Habib may have been in Beirut and had asked Draper to go to Jerusalem to try to convince the Israelis to stop their shelling of the city. That sort of shuttle diplomacy set a pattern for activities which took place over much of the summer, 1982. Habib was trying to work out an arrangement which would have the PLO evacuate Beirut and would have brought the conflict to an end. Phil worked out of our Embassy in Beirut. As time wore on, he became less and less even handed; he became increasingly an Israeli critic, influenced no doubt by the continual Israeli shelling of Beirut. Although the attacks were to be targeted on the PLO, undoubtedly the whole population suffered, including Habib. He must have been shaken at the continuing sight of smoke plumes from artillery shells and bombs from planes; his vantage point inside the American Embassy in Beirut gave him an entirely different perspective from ours; he could see the war through Lebanese and PLO perspective. Because of our diplomatic niceties, no U.S. official was permitted to enter Lebanon to observe the war from the Israeli side. We watched the war through newspapers and television; that was entirely different than seeing it as Habib did from our Embassy in Beirut.

Habib saw the continual break-downs of the cease-fires; he noticed the creeping forward progress of the Israeli forces; he saw the effects of the bombings and the artillery fire on innocent civilians. The cumulative effect of these observations increased Habib's anguish about Israeli policy. Periodically, he or Draper would visit Jerusalem following a very dangerous escape route from Beirut. They usually took a helicopter to an American carrier which was just off the Lebanese coast; then they would fly to Cyprus to connect

with a flight to Jerusalem. Either Habib or Draper would meet with Begin or Shamir or Sharon in an effort to convince them as tactfully as possible to cease their military activities so that diplomacy might be given a chance. Habib and Draper felt that if the Israelis would stop their incessant bombardments, then they could get in touch with the Palestinian leadership. They thought that if given a breathing moment and an opportunity for a dialogue with the PLO, they could convince the PLO to evacuate. But as long as military pressure was being applied, there was no way for the Americans to meet with the Palestinians—it was just too dangerous to be on the streets. Furthermore, the Israeli shelling was causing so much agony that no diplomatic discussions could possibly be contemplated. In effect, Habib and Draper were saying that the current Israeli policy was counter-productive. It was usually Draper who carried the message; if he didn't, then there would be indirect messages relayed through telephone conversations over secure lines that lasted for an hour or two at a stretch between Habib or Draper and the Operations Center in the Department of State. Usually, Habib would talk to Charlie Hill, then the acting Deputy Assistant Secretary and the designated liaison between Habib and the Secretary's Office. Hill would listen to Habib, both the factual reports and the anguish about Israeli actions; in general, Habib's message was that some one had to get the Israelis to stop their military activities. These phone calls would result in periodic instructions to me to call on Israeli officials and try to get them to cease and desist. Sometimes Washington would call Ambassador Arens in and give him the same strong message that we wanted a halt in the shelling of Beirut. The pattern of an anguished Habib reporting at great length to Washington followed by some kind of demarche delivered either in Washington or in Jerusalem began at the end of June and continued through the summer until the PLO finally withdrew.

There were several times during July when it appeared as if the PLO was prepared to withdraw. They were asking for all sorts of guarantees and assurances, primarily from us; they wanted to leave some forces to protect the refugee camps. One of the problems was that there were no countries that were particularly interested in becoming PLO hosts,

especially the military forces. That brought the U.S. into the unusual role, stemming from Habib's mediation efforts, of trying to find a haven for the PLO. American embassies in the region were making discreet inquiries of their host government whether they would be willing to accept these PLO fighters. There were no takers because these “immigrants” would prove to be nothing but trouble either domestically or internationally. Egypt, for example, whom we considered to be a logical safe-haven, didn't want any part of the PLO. Mubarak was crystal clear that although he had great sympathy for Arafat and the PLO, he was not about to get the PLO out of the mess they had made and was not about to jeopardize his peace treaty with Israel. I think we were talking about 4-5,000 men; it was not a gigantic number, but it was substantial. Ultimately, the U.S. was instrumental in finding other homes for these troops—they were actually dispersed throughout the region, some to South Yemen, some to Tunisia, some to Syria on the Beirut-Damascus highway in convoys. We were instrumental in assuring safe passage and preventing the Israelis from firing on the trucks which they watched drive by. Much later, Arafat himself with his senior staff ended up in Tunis. Some moved north in Lebanon to Tripoli so that not all PLO forces evacuated Lebanon. That is what triggered later fighting between the Syrians and their surrogates and the PLO which eventually resulted in the PLO being completely ejected from Lebanon. We in fact arranged for Arafat's safe conduct out of Tripoli and he probably owes his life to the U.S. diplomats who were responsible. I presume he has remembered that fact although gratitude is not always a common virtue in the Middle East.

I have described in general a lot of the daily activities during this period of the Summer of 1982. I was very busy, trying to stay synchronized with policy developments in Washington. After Shultz took office, the atmospherics changed substantially. Many people in Washington were getting fed up with the Israeli maneuvering and continuing Beirut bombardments; increasingly Washington was doubting Israeli good faith and the bonds of trust between the two countries was weakening. I shuttled frequently back and forth between Tel Aviv and Jerusalem; when I didn't call on the Israeli leadership in person, I was on the phone to it.

Q: What was Arens doing in Washington during this period?

LEWIS: He was being fairly starchy, but handled himself well in a rather difficult situation. One of the sad aspects of this period was the tensions that mounted because of the issue of a peace-keeping force. When it became clear that there was insufficient support for the idea of moving UNIFIL north, we finally agreed to join with the French, the Italians and the British in sending forces to the area, which would act in a coordinated fashion although each under its own flag. These troops were to serve as a temporary shield for Beirut, screening it off from the Israeli forces. These forces were to establish a free zone which could eventually be used as a withdrawal route for the PLO. We and the Israelis were during this time at considerable odds about the facts. What we were told about the situation around Beirut was seldom in agreement with our own observations were as reported by our Embassy in Beirut and the Habib group. Of course, they were being provided information by the Lebanese and by the Palestinians neither of whom were neutral observers of the fighting. To this day, I do not know how much deliberate misinformation we were fed, how much was correct and how much was just information which had been filtered through the fog of war. I do know that there was a lot of factual disagreement between the combatants about what was actually happening on the ground. There was also a lot of finger pointing.

The sympathy of the administration, which up to early July, had been strongly pro-Israel, increasingly shifted towards the Palestinians. That was not a formal policy shift, but the tenor of the instructions emanating from Washington changed as did the Washington reaction to events in Lebanon. There was a growing sympathy for the Lebanese and the PLO, who turned out to be considerably more tenacious than any one anticipated. We reacted as we normally do when there is an under-dog; we sympathize with it. That was true even among those who were well disposed towards Israel. My own reactions changed as well; you could not be involved in those very trying days without feeling frustration and anger. The Israeli mood was also changing; they were showing frustration with the United

States particularly once the multi-national peace keeping forces were deployed. They gagged at the sight of an American force, an alleged close friend and ally, stationed in Lebanon for purposes which were somewhat inimicable to their own perceived interests, although some Israelis saw our intervention of potential benefit. It did not help that our military refused to have any contact of any kind with the Israeli Defense Force even though they were in close proximity. There was considerable discussion of the danger of uncoordinated overflights as well as potential for other accidents. So there was a lot of tension on the military side in light of this close proximity of forces especially since we for policy reasons refused to have any contacts with the Israeli military.

Habib during this period traveled around the area to Egypt, Syria, Saudi Arabia, Jordan and Israel trying to develop a coordinated plan to convince the PLO to leave Beirut and to get the Israelis to join a real cease-fire during which the PLO might depart. He would come to Jerusalem with all sorts of proposals and formulas. In the meantime, Arafat was meeting with the press in Beirut putting on a very defiant air; he seemed to believe that he would not have to evacuate Beirut and that his position was salvageable. There has been a lot of discussion about how he developed this perception. There are some credible reports that at the beginning of his troops' retreat from south Lebanon, the PLO had become completely disorganized under the Israeli pummeling. There are some indications that by late June the PLO was ready to leave Lebanon through Beirut port. But at a critical moment while this issue was being debated, Arafat received a message from Saudi Arabia which reassured him and led him to believe that the U.S. would intervene and prevent Israel from over-running the PLO in Beirut. This message was received while the first cease-fires were being declared. The Israelis have often alleged—and there is some evidence to support their contention—that Cap Weinberger, who was never sympathetic in the slightest with the Israeli invasion and therefore at odds with Haig and later with Shultz about our Israeli relations, while paying a visit to Saudi Arabia at about this time, had said to the Saudis that President Reagan would never permit Israel to enter and occupy West Beirut. This may have been transmitted to the PLO giving them the sense

that it could count on the United States to stop the Israelis at the last second. It is clear that from the panic stage that followed in the immediate aftermath of the Israeli invasion in late June, the PLO recovered and in fact took a very pugnacious and unrelenting stance. It took six-eight weeks of fighting before they eventually left Beirut. During this period, the Israelis slowly applied increasing military pressure and eventually damaged much of West Beirut in the effort to root the PLO out. In retrospect, if we in fact conveyed the wrong signal, either intentionally or inadvertently, that may have been one of the major causes for Beirut's great damage and suffering. Had the PLO not thought that we would come to their rescue at the last second, they might well have fled Beirut shortly after the Israeli invasion, thereby sparing Beirut and its inhabitants from a few weeks of hell.

As I said, during June and into July, Habib was pleading with the Israelis to cease their bombardments so that the PLO might withdraw. Sharon became the focus of our frustration and anger because we held him accountable for all the cease-fire breakdowns, for the shelling of Beirut, the misinformation, the alleged double-dealings, etc. As I mentioned, Habib's argument was always that if the Israelis would only cease and desist for a few days, he could put a deal together which would end up with a PLO withdrawal from Beirut. Israeli intelligence, which was quite extensive and which was based to a considerable extent on Phalangist sources as well at its own, was portraying an entirely different mood in the PLO leadership. It described that group as defiant and almost euphoric because it was attracting so much worldwide attention. Furthermore, Israeli intelligence described the PLO as convinced that it could outlast the Israelis or that in the final analysis, the world would save them. This perspective led the Israeli army to disagree with Habib's assessment; it was convinced that the PLO would retreat only if Israel would maintain and indeed even increase its military pressure so that the PLO would understand that it had no option except evacuation. This disagreement about PLO intentions and perspectives gave rise to U.S.-Israel tensions about the validity of Israeli military policy in Lebanon during July and August. Our dialogue with Israel became very bitter and spoiled American-Israeli relationships at senior levels.

Q: Do you have any hypothesis about whether the Weinberger's comments in Saudi were made on purpose? Or were they the expressions of an unsophisticated, inexperienced man?

LEWIS: My guess is that the remarks were not made intentionally, but rather a reflection of the policy disputes that were then raging in Washington. Furthermore, this was a period when the foreign policy tiller was not in very firm hands. Haig was on his way out, Shultz was not yet in the job, Reagan was a laissez faire President and every Cabinet member was marching to his or her own drum beat. The NSC was weak, failing to coordinate foreign policy effectively. I suppose that if Weinberger had actually expressed the thoughts that are now being impugned to him, may well have believed that Ronald Reagan would not have permitted in the final analysis that the PLO to be expelled. But the Weinberger comments, if indeed they were made, were mischievous in their effect; there is no doubt about that.

Habib was in Jerusalem once again towards the end of July. In the days preceding his arrival, there had been considerable dialogue about the Syrians. Israeli jets had attacked and destroyed three Syrian SAM sites in the Bekaa Valley as well as Palestinian targets in and around Beirut. While that bombardment was going on, Arafat was meeting that same day with a group of U.S. congresspersons: Mary Rose Oakar (D-Ohio), Peter McCloskey (D-CA)—he left Congress soon after that. After the meeting with Arafat, the American delegation came out and proudly waved a statement which they had gotten Arafat to agree to withdraw if Israel accepted certain UN resolutions about Palestine. McCloskey insisted that this agreement signified PLO recognition of Israel which the Americans considered a great triumph. McCloskey came to Israel after his meeting with Arafat and tried to sell this interpretation to Begin and the Israelis, but he was not very successful. In the first place, they didn't agree with McCloskey and secondly, the Congressman was not very popular in Israel to start with. The Israelis felt that the American delegation had been duped by the PLO.

We looked at the statement that Arafat had agreed to and we agreed with the Israelis that it did not represent any change in PLO position. But McCloskey and his colleagues were, or wished to be, convinced that their meeting with Arafat was a significant progress towards peace.

On July 27, while Habib was meeting with the Israeli leadership, Senator Paul Tsongas was in Tel Aviv. I was moving from one set of meetings to another. That day was also notable because the Israeli jets bombed a residential area in Beirut. The Lebanese authorities declared that 120 people were killed and 100 more wounded in the raid, most of them being civilians. The U.S. responded to this raid by suspending indefinitely shipments of cluster bombs to Israel; there had been considerable pressure to take this step for some time and that particular bombing finally forced Reagan to take the step. We said that we had done so on policy grounds and not as a matter of law, i.e., a finding of violation of the military assistance laws.

As July passed, Habib was trying to get PLO agreement to withdraw. Another cease-fire had been declared. On July 29, the UN Security Council voted 14-0 on a resolution demanding that Israel cease its blockade of West Beirut, which had been in effect for several weeks. This was the Israeli way of avoiding entering West Beirut; they had hoped that a cut off of supplies might force the Lebanese to insist that the PLO leave. That was viewed as a very callous policy by much of the world, including many Americans. So when the resolution came up in the Security Council, we abstained, thereby permitting the resolution to be passed. That U.S. action came as a blow to the Israelis. By this time, Reagan's comments about the Lebanese situation took on a much harder edge. He decried the bloodshed in Lebanon and called for an end to it. He was particularly critical after an August 1 Israeli raid that was particularly destructive.

At about this time, a suitcase filled with explosives went off in the Munich airport injuring seven innocent bystanders. So the tensions were rising on all sides.

At the beginning of August, I returned to Washington to participate in meetings that Foreign Minister Shamir was holding there. He had been dispatched to Washington to try to improve the coordination and understanding that had seriously deteriorated during July. I had meetings with Shultz and Eagleburger; I attended a meeting that Arens had with Eagleburger. I had a session with Judge Clark, the NSC advisor. It was not a pleasant consultation because by this time, the Washington mood was generally very anti-Israeli. I met Shamir at the airport on August 1. The next morning, I had an early session with Shultz prior to his meeting with Shamir.After the Shultz briefing ended, Nick Veliotes and I shared a car to the White House where we took part in a 15 minute “pre-brief” for the President, then sat in on the 1 # hour Reagan-Shamir meeting. It also included numerous other White House aides, Shultz, Weinberger, etc. Though polite, the meeting was pretty tense - and essentially a standoff. Reagan's skepticism about Israeli intentions was clearly growing apace.

We then returned to the State Department for another hour-long Shultz-Shamir session, followed by a working lunch on the Eighth Floor. Shultz was for the first time getting to understand how immovable Shamir (and the Israelis) could be. Both men were on their diplomatic best behavior, but neither was at all persuaded by the other's arguments - which centered on how best to get the PLO to evacuate Beirut - by constant military pressure, or by Phil Habib's negotiating tactics.

I then accompanied Shamir to the Pentagon where Cap Weinberger worked him over much more combatively - with little effect. Shamir parried Weinberger's bitter complaints about Sharon's military moves with his own counter criticism of the “insulting” way the U.S. forces in the MFO were behaving toward the IDF - as if the U.S. and Israel were enemies!

Returning to State, I met with Shultz to fill him in on the Pentagon meeting and to share impressions of the day's sessions. Neither of us were at all encouraged. Fred Ikl# then picked me up to give me a lift to Ambassador Moshe Arens' residence for the dinner Arens was hosting in Shamir's honor. The usual cast of political supporters of Israel and some

friendly journalists; the usual rather forced toasts to eternal U.S.-Israeli amity. A rather subdued mood.

Tuesday, August 3 and Wednesday, August 4 were eventful indeed. By the time I caught the plane for Tel Aviv at 7:40 p.m. Wednesday evening I was running on empty!

Accompanied Shamir to meetings on the Hill with Senate Foreign Relations Committee and House Foreign Affairs Committee on Tuesday morning; then I left Shamir to his customary round of private meetings with Jewish supporters from the Congress and various Jewish organizations, his press briefings for the Israeli and American press corps (separately, of course), etc. (All these events being absolutely SOP for high-level Israeli visits.) I went by to see Bud McFarlane at the NSC, then talked with Jeane Kirkpatrick and subsequently joined her for her meeting with Shamir. Finally returned to State for other meetings and what turned out to be an all night vigil in the Operations Center!

The news from Beirut was getting increasingly ominous. Israeli air strikes and artillery fire seemed to be growing in scope and intensity. Phil Habib weighed in by phone with increasingly angry demands that we contact Begin. George Shultz had joined Veliotes and me in the Op Center at a console to speak directly with Phil. At his direction I tried to reach Begin, to no avail. Shultz then had me rouse Shamir from bed at his hotel (by phone) and he laid it on the line sternly to Shamir - making clear that these Israeli actions were completely contrary to the soothing reassurances which Shamir had given the President and Shultz earlier in the day. He demanded an immediate explanation from Begin. Shamir protested that he had no information about any new military assaults - but promised to get ahold of Begin immediately. (It was by then after midnight in Washington but early morning in Israel and Lebanon.) We sat impatiently in the Op Center waiting for him to call back. When he finally did so around 1:30 or 2:00 a.m., he told Shultz (with me on the line) that he had reached Begin, who had immediately consulted Sharon, and that Begin insisted that our information must be incorrect since Sharon had checked and found “nothing unusual” going on in Beirut! At almost that moment, Phil Habib called in an angry

eye witness account of seeing the Israeli planes bombing West Beirut targets at that very moment! Shultz's U.S. Marine Corps background kicked in at that point; his face turned almost purple as he told Shamir just what Habib was personally watching; he also told him to set the Prime Minister straight and see to it that the bombardment ceased forthwith. We stayed in the Op Center the rest of the night and eventually the reports from Beirut began to show some positive effect of these three way exchanges. Shultz's personal initiation into the frustrations of dealing with Begin/Shamir/Sharon in the heat of crises (long-since all too familiar to me) was a very unhappy one. His view of Begin's credibility was strained to the limit, only slightly attenuated by my urging him to recognize that Sharon's propensity to mislead Begin should not be underestimated.

Veliotes and I had a skull session with Shultz at 5:00 a.m. - then at 7:15 a.m. we all assembled in the White House basement in the Situation Room with Reagan, Bush, Weinberger, Clark, McFarlane, Kirkpatrick, assorted Generals, and numerous other White House and Pentagon representatives for an impromptu NSC meeting on the Beirut Crisis. It lasted until 11:40 a.m., intermittently (though most of that time without Reagan); I met privately with Bill Casey during one of the breaks to discuss some planned CIA activity in Israel. The mood was pretty grim all around. Bush and Weinberger led the charge in favor of cracking down hard on the Israelis; Jeane Kirkpatrick made an eloquent defense of the Israeli rationale for keeping up military pressure to persuade Arafat that he had no option but to abandon Beirut - the objective we all were seeking. Reagan seemed prone to accept Jeane's arguments; she obviously was a favorite of his. McFarlane made delphic, somewhat ambiguous interventions. Shultz said relatively little in the large meetings, though I gathered that he had expressed his views separately to the President and I doubt they were very complimentary to Israel.

After a few more meetings at State, I headed for the airport. It was abundantly clear that the Begin government's standing with the Reagan Administration had taken some heavy hits. There were more to come.

I got home Thursday afternoon and the next few days were more or less normal - i.e., late nights on the secure phone to Washington, back and forth to Jerusalem, press back grounders to try to checkmate tendentious leaks from the GOI about alleged mistakes and miscalculations by Habib in his indirect mediation between the PLO and the Israeli Government (carried on via intermediaries in the Lebanese Government), briefings for a visiting group of retired U.S. generals, meetings with other Ambassadors, attending the Alvin Ailey Dance Company's performance at Caesarea's ancient Roman theater, etc, etc, etc. The usual merry-go-round.

On August 10 I had a private meeting with Begin at his residence in Jerusalem. It was testy. The PLO still hadn't agreed to depart and Sharon was pressing for more IDF action. Phil Habib flew in from Beirut that evening and we stayed up much of the night thrashing out how he should approach Begin to try to get across just how damaging to Phil's efforts were Sharon's military moves. We spent 2 # wearying hours with Begin the next morning (Wednesday). Phil then returned to Beirut and I to Tel Aviv/Herzliyya, believing that the Israelis would now keep things relatively quiet while Phil finished negotiating with Arafat. .....However, ...

A massive air attack on Beirut on August 11(?) resulted in an angry telephone call from President Reagan to Prime Minister Begin. It followed a call that I made to Begin earlier during which I had read him the riot act without waiting for any instructions. My call had angered Begin, but had already triggered a command to the Israeli Air Force to cease the bombardment, well before Reagan's call with his “ultimatum” to stop the bombing, or else! (Since I had already reported by secure phone the results of my early call to Begin, I've always been suspicious that Reagan's subsequent call and the publicity given to its tough tone by the White House was all something of a piece of theater!) In a cabinet meeting that morning, an angry Begin had taken away Sharon's unilateral authority to order any major military operations; thereafter they required the Prime Minister's approval. That would suggest that Begin did not know of the Beirut air strike until after the fact.

Habib was reporting from Beirut in very angry tones that he was just about to complete the negotiations for the PLO withdrawal when the air attack came; it had completely disrupted the delicate status of the negotiations. On August 13, the PLO finally provided Habib a list of 7100 troops who would be withdrawn from Lebanon; it also proposed a timetable for the withdrawal. On August 14, Habib flew to Tel Aviv, where I met him and drove to Jerusalem with him. The following day, early in the morning, before the regular Israeli Cabinet meeting, Habib and I met with Begin, Sharon and others. Habib presented the withdrawal plan, which drew a lot of carping reservations from Sharon. Begin agreed to submit it to the Cabinet; it was discussed there later in the morning. With Begin's blessings, the Cabinet accepted the plan in principal, subject to some further refinements in the details. At the same time, the Cabinet withdrew Sharon's demand that Israel had to have a name-by-name list of every member of the PLO to be evacuated from Lebanon. Habib had also relayed a proposal that a multi-national force be deployed into Lebanon to supervise the evacuation. That generated a lot of discussion, but was finally accepted by the Israel government. A couple of days later, the PLO and the Lebanon government approved the same evacuation plan; the Israeli Cabinet met again on August 19 and gave its final approval.

Interestingly enough, during this period of high tensions and drama culminating in the withdrawal agreement, our Embassy was going through the periodic change in key personnel. As is often the case, there is no relationship between the personnel assignment process and the political situation on the ground. Bill Brown, my outstanding deputy for three years, was transferred back to Washington and was being replaced by Bob Flaten. So during this very tense weekend, we were giving a farewell dinner for the Browns and a welcome dinner for the Flatens and going through the usual change of personnel ceremonies as if nothing else were happening. In reality, I was shuttling back and forth to Jerusalem with Habib trying to wrap up the PLO withdrawal negotiations. I hated to give Bill up at that stage because there was still a lot of work to be done before the PLO would finally evacuate. He had been an extraordinarily reliable and strong right hand.

I had known Bob Flaten for a long time and had a lot of confidence in him, but he was not thoroughly knowledgeable on current Israeli affairs, having just completed a tour as coordinator of Afghan programs. He was a real expert in Afghan affairs; we had first met when I was DCM in Kabul in 1971 and he was the Afghan desk officer in Washington. I worked with him then very closely and had a very high regard for him, but the timing of the change in DCMs in Tel Aviv could not have been much worst. Bob had served in Tel Aviv a few years earlier and therefore knew something about Israel-Palestinian affairs, but it was not current knowledge. Nevertheless, we managed to survive the change in the middle of all of the excitement. I even managed to play some tennis that weekend and had lunch with the President Navon at Caesarea, where he was vacationing. He was quite disturbed by the manner in which Begin was handling the PLO issue; he talked very frankly to me about Begin's stubbornness, Sharon's disruptive tactics and other concerns that he had.

To add to all the turmoil, this was the weekend before our son was leaving to go off to college. He had just had spent four years at and just graduated from the American International School and was departing for James Madison University in Virginia. This was just another example of the continuing juggling act that a Foreign Service officer has to perform to be faithful to his or her public duties and private responsibilities.

The deployment of the first contingent of the multi-national (French, Italian and American) peacekeeping force that had been established took place during this week. The cease-fire, although tenuous, was holding and the last details of the evacuation were being settled. On August 20, 800 Marines were ordered to land in Lebanon from their offshore carriers. On the 21st, the PLO began its evacuation; 400 of its troops boarded a ship for Cyprus. The French forces landed at about the same time. The process moved forward relatively smoothly, except for a couple of near catastrophes. None were reported by the media, but they did give rise to considerable anxiety for us in the area.

One of the crises occurred on Sunday evening, August 22. Contrary to the arrangements negotiated, the PLO had decided to take some heavy weapons and vehicles with them. Side arms were all that were supposed to be taken by the PLO. In any case, the first PLO contingent showed up, flags flying, at the Beirut harbor under the watchful eyes of the multi-national forces and further away, of the Israeli army. This PLO group had thirteen jeeps, armed with mounted machine guns, with it which it wished to take to Cyprus. Sharon and the Israeli army objected strenuously. We thought that the whole arrangement might come apart over these jeeps. There was a lot of telephoning between Beirut (Habib), Jerusalem (the Defense Ministry), Tel Aviv (me) and eventually the PLO agreed not to ship them out. We undertook to take custody of the jeeps and agreed to ship them to another country where they would eventually be returned to the PLO. As I recall, those jeeps wandered around the Mediterranean on an American war-ship for weeks thereafter before we finally managed to dispose of them. This was just an illustration of the lack of statesmanship on both sides which caused us as intermediaries to burn a lot of midnight oil unnecessarily.

But there was a much larger crisis on the 22nd which almost caused an exchange of fire between the Israeli Navy and the American Navy. That was an occasion which is usually seen by history in a footnote as it should be, but it could have been taken up several pages if events had proceeded differently. The Israeli Navy, which was hovering just off the Lebanese shore observing the PLO withdrawal, seemed to be menacing the evacuation although it had not taken any offensive action. The American Naval Force which was navigating in the same seas found the Israeli presence unacceptable and a potential barrier to the smooth implementation of the evacuation agreement. There was concern that the Israelis might sink some of the transport vessels once the PLO troops were on board and the ships were on their way to Cyprus. I received word that I was to request that the Israeli withdraw their Navy. I called the Prime Minister; he was outraged by my request. He insisted that it was essential that the Israeli forces be permitted to observe the process so that they could assured that it met all the conditions

of the agreement. Our Navy then threatened to sink the Israeli ships; I was entrusted to relay that policy to the Israelis. You can well imagine the ensuing flurry of phone calls that this statement of intent generated. Begin, Washington and I were on the phone almost continuously. I could not be in direct contact with the American fleet commander; I had to communicate with the Navy through Washington. A stalemate developed; Begin was furious and offended and not about to order his naval units to withdraw. Our Navy appeared almost anxious to demonstrate its fighting capabilities. The tensions between our respective armed forces were already high; this demand by our Navy did nothing to lower them. Eventually, I constructed some language which was to serve as an understanding between Israel and the U.S. and submitted it to Begin for his approval. The language was artfully drafted to save his face and that of our Navy. Begin finally agreed to it and issued a brief statement of confidence in the multi-national force. Soon thereafter, the Israeli ships moved slightly and our Navy withdrew its threats. So by Sunday night, the crisis had passed, but it had been a very tense afternoon during which some outbreak of fire might well have taken place. Everybody took a very macho position which made the outcome unpredictable. I have often reflected what history might have said had the American and the Israeli navies exchanged fire particularly since both were present in the area to observe the evacuation of the PLO forces and to insure compliance with an agreement. Because most of the negotiations on this event was done telephonically —much over the secure phone to Washington—the written record is very small; my instructions were provided by Washington over the phone. The whole episode is also another illustration of the fact that despite all the modern communications available to diplomats, that despite the ability of a Secretary of State to be in another country in hours, that despite the predilection of heads of state to communicate directly with each other, there are still times when an Ambassador is needed and needed urgently.

Q: Did it turn out that there had been some independent action by the U.S. Fleet commander?

LEWIS: I think there was probably a little muscle flexing going on, but I am not sure to this day how many of the commander's demands were determined on the spot and how many were authorized by the Pentagon. The whole episode received little notice, mostly in the Israeli press. Everyone played it down; it served no one's interest to highlight it.

The evacuation was completed on August 22. The ships used were Greek chartered ships, hired by the PLO and escorted by the navies of the three multi-national forces. The ships had to navigate through the Israeli screen which had been set up just outside the harbor. The PLO was certain that the Israeli would try to sink the ships and therefore were pressuring the Americans and the French to provide close protection. I don't believe that the Israelis ever intended to harm the PLO ships, but I can certainly understand the PLO's concern. The PLO left with heads high, flags flying while marching down to the harbor, trying to make the evacuation look like a great victory. The Israelis were very busy taking pictures from the hillsides with telescopic lenses trying to capture the image of each PLO fighter for future intelligence purposes.

On Monday, the 23rd, the Lebanese Parliament elected Bashir Gemayel as President of the country. The vote was 57-5 which was clear evidence that Gemayel's allies, the Israelis, had made it very difficult for the Muslim delegates to reach the Parliament building where the vote was taken. That vote was also an indication that the joint Israeli-Phalangist strategy had succeeded. The PLO had been expelled and Gemayel was now President. Both Sharon and Begin were counting on the new President to bring Lebanon into some sort of alliance relationship with Israel while at the same time cleaning up the remnants of PLO presence which might still have been left behind.

The U.S. Marines took up their positions in the port area on August 25. The French and the Italians had been the main multi-national forces during the evacuation. The total multi-national force was about three-four thousand strong, scattered throughout Beirut in strategic areas. They were there essentially to protect the PLO who had insisted on such a force to ward off any Israeli attack. It was part of the agreement that Habib had worked

out with the PLO and the involved governments. Throughout the summer, the Israel were insisting that Egypt should rejoin the autonomy negotiations which had been essentially suspended when Israel invaded Lebanon. Mubarak had said on several occasions that he could not resume those negotiations as long as Israeli forces continue to be deployed in Lebanon. He had even raised the stakes by suggesting that autonomy negotiations could not really resume until the United States itself accepted the principal of self-determination for the Palestinians. Israel was determined, as soon as the PLO had been expelled from Lebanon, to put pressure on us to pressure the Egyptians to resume negotiations. Begin made his positions clear to a Congressional delegation that was visiting Jerusalem during this week.

Habib visited Israel on a couple of occasions during this period. This coincided with the 66th annual convention of Hadassah which met in Jerusalem. That brought thousands of American women and I was asked to address them one evening. On the 26th, Sharon left for New York, with the political situation in the area presumably on track. His main purpose was to put his political relationships with the American Jewish community back on track in the United States. That community had become alienated from Israel in light of the invasion; they were not happy with the pictures of the Beirut shelling which were widely seen in the U.S. The number of casualties that the media reported had been caused by Israeli actions did not sit well at all. Sharon also went to Washington and met with Weinberger and Shultz. Those meetings were followed by a White House announcement that Weinberger would visit the region: Lebanon, Egypt and Israel. Sharon, in his American TV interviews, was saying that since the PLO had been expelled from Lebanon, it was now possible to bring some stability to the area with the cooperation of the moderate Palestinians on the West Bank, who would no longer be burdened by the heavy hand of the PLO. That had always been one of Sharon's strategic goals. Egypt continued to refuse resumption of negotiations as long as Israeli troops were in Lebanon.

In the meantime, during the whole month of August, Washington was undertaking highly secret planning for a major peace initiative. Right after Shultz had become Secretary in

mid-July, he and the President had concluded that once the PLO had been evacuated from Lebanon, it would be important to refocus everyone's attention on the peace process by restarting negotiations which had been suspended. Shultz instructed some of his staff to quietly and secretly develop an American initiative. I knew that this process was going on because while in Washington In July, I had the opportunity to discuss it briefly at least; I was given the chance to review and comment on some early drafts, but the whole exercise was on a very close hold. There was no time table for the beginning of the initiative, but plans were being drawn up. I was relatively comfortable with what I had seen and heard. As I said, the initiative was being worked on secretly during August while the struggles continued in Lebanon. I was receiving some very cryptic briefings over the secure phone from Charlie Hill, but the conversations were not comprehensive enough for me to have a clear picture of the staff's proposals nor did I have any sense of the timing. I was unaware and not informed that Nick Veliotes, who, as Assistant Secretary, was in charge of developing the initiative proposal, had consulted King Hussein of Jordan. In fact, I believe that Veliotes secretly visited Amman unbeknownst to me. Veliotes had been our Ambassador to Jordan and therefore knew the King quite well. He apparently got the King's agreement to enter the peace negotiations based on the draft initiative that Nick discussed with him. But nothing was said to the Israelis, contrary to long standing written commitments that we would not undertake any major initiatives on the peace process without consulting Israel. Washington was greatly concerned that if the Israelis had known about the initiative, they would leak it prematurely and would thereby sabotage the whole effort. Furthermore, it was Washington's view that unless King Hussein became seriously interested it would not have been worth launching the initiative; he was viewed at that time as the key.

So while the Israelis were focusing on the restart of the autonomy negotiations, even though the Egyptians were not a willing player, we were concentrating secretly on a new peace initiative. I was almost totally in the dark about that effort as were the Israelis. When I later found out about what was going on, I was very upset. I discussed my unhappiness

with Shultz and Veliotes. I understood their concern about the possibility of leaks and the possibility of an preemptive sabotage effort by the Israelis. Nevertheless, the Washington tactics left me out of the loop and deprived it of some advice that I could have provided about how to handle the initiative in Israel when they wanted to launch it. I was not convinced that the idea of an initiative was a good one at that time, but I am convinced that after it was launched, it had been presented in the worst light and at the worst possible moment. I think had I been consulted earlier, we might have avoided some of detrimental consequences that the initiative produced.

In the meantime, in Israel, Begin was delighted with the PLO troops' expulsion. He decided that after a very stressful summer, he could take a short vacation. He had never taken a vacation since becoming Prime Minister four years earlier. That he was ready for a vacation then was a clear indication of how worn out he was by the end of the summer. So he and Mrs. Begin went to Nahariyya on the coast south of the Lebanon border. They rested in a small house. They had intended to spend about a week there during the last part of August. That seemed to be a propitious time for vacation especially since Bashir Gemayel had been installed as President of Lebanon, the fighting had ceased and the PLO had been expelled.

On August 31, a Tuesday, I received an “Eyes Only, Top Secret” message from President Reagan which I was to deliver to Begin. The message contained what became known as the “Reagan initiative”, which was the product of the six weeks of planning I described earlier. I was instructed to deliver the letter immediately to Begin. I was also given some talking points which I was to deliver orally. I was told that the initiative would be unveiled to the public in the near future and that therefore it was extremely important that I see Begin immediately and get his reaction and hopefully his acquiescence. What the U.S. government was obviously doing was going through the motions of consulting with Israel. I later learned that similar messages had been sent to our Embassies in Cairo, Amman and Riyadh. All the Ambassadors were requested to deliver the letters and the comments immediately and to report reactions immediately. We were told that the President intended

to make his new plan public in a speech to be delivered within 72 hours. We were not to give any impression that the plan could be modified, although of course we would listen and report reactions. I called Begin and apologized for interrupting his vacation, but that I had to see him about a most urgent matter. He said that he was very tired and wondered whether the matter could not wait for two or three days. I told him that I had personal instructions from the President to see him immediately and he finally agreed to see me. So I got in a car and drove to Nahariyya which was about two hours north of Tel Aviv. I left about 3:15 in the afternoon and got to Nahariyya at about 5 p.m. Begin ushered me into his sitting room, very politely. He wore a sport shirt, which for Begin was extraordinary since he almost always wore coat and tie. Alisa brought us a cup of tea and we talked a little about the success of the Lebanon operation. Begin was in a good, relaxed although tired mood; he was obviously was very satisfied with recent events. Then I gave him the President's letter which he read. I then mentioned that I had some oral points which I was supposed to deliver. He asked me to proceed which I did. While I was talking, he kept looking at me, with an expression that was getting sadder by the moment. When I finished, he just looked at me for a couple of minutes and then said: “Sam (sigh), could you not have let us enjoy our victory just for a day or two?”. Then he pulled himself together and more formally said: “Mr. Ambassador, I have listened carefully and I am extremely upset by your message. It is entirely contrary to all of our understandings with your country. This initiative is not in accordance with the Camp David agreements; in fact, it is a violation of those agreements. Of course, I will consult with my Cabinet and then I will give you a response. I do need a little time for that process”. He went on for several minutes in this vein and became increasingly angry as he talked. He was not happy with the content and the implications of the President's letter. He was obviously upset by the lack of any indication that the initiative was being developed and by the absence of any prior consultations. In my talking points, Washington had included the point that we were consulting simultaneously with Jordan, Egypt and Saudi Arabia. The mention of this last country really set Begin off. He was especially furious that on an issue that involved first and foremost Israel and perhaps also Jordan, that Saudi Arabia, which was not a central

player, was being treated in the same manner as Israel. He was also upset that we had apparently already consulted the Jordanians—my talking points included something along the lines that “we have reason to believe from our contacts that the King of Jordan will be favorably disposed” to this initiative. That certainly tipped what we had done and Begin did not take it very well at all. But the part of the process that really set him off was our approach to the Saudis simultaneously to my conversations with him. He took that as a diminution of Israel's role. He then recounted many of the summer's events; it was a long and very unpleasant conversation. Begin vacillated between anger and weary resignation about American policy. He took on an aggrieved mood of bitterness and of being treated unfairly. The timing of my visit could not of course have been worse; I interrupted his first vacation in four years. So the Begin's response was negative both for official and personal reasons. By the time I left him, it was quite clear that Begin would recommend to the Cabinet that the American initiative be rejected forcefully, but he said that he would take the matter up with the Cabinet. He did request, as I mentioned, that the President give him enough time to convene the Cabinet. That would be time consuming since he would have to return to Jerusalem and convene the Cabinet and have a thorough response. Begin asked me to pass to the President his plea that the speech be deferred at least until the beginning of the following week or five or six days hence. I told Begin that I would report his request, but that I had no way of knowing whether the President could wait that long. I was aware of the Washington concerns about premature leaks. He pointed out that he thought that we owed him at least that much time to consider Israel's response. So I dashed back to Tel Aviv and spent the evening writing my report. I strongly urged that the speech be delayed long enough to allow Begin to consult with the Cabinet. I also called Washington on the secure phone and elaborated on my written message.

The initiative was handled in a manner which was bound to produce a disaster. It was almost so ordained. Israel may well have rejected the substance of the initiative in any case, but a more sensitive process of consultation may have avoided the vituperation and bad feeling that in fact occurred. Those side effects could have been avoided. The basic

problem was that the Israelis had been concentrating on Lebanon all summer; that issue had not been yet finally resolved. There were still Israeli troops in Lebanon and there were some messy residual problems yet to be resolved with the new Lebanese government. It was not very likely that the Israeli government, psychologically, would be prepared at that stage to deal with a major American peace initiative which concerned the West Bank and Gaza. There were of course central and difficult problems in those areas, but the time was certainly not propitious to raise them since the focus of the government was still on Lebanon. So the rejection of the initiative was most likely, but it didn't have to happen with such rancor.

The first person in the NSC who read the cable was probably Geoffrey Kemp, the Middle East expert who worked for Judge Clark, the NSC advisor at the time. I am not clear that Reagan ever saw my cable or anyone else's for that matter. I assume that the President was briefed. But as far as I could tell the tactics for the initiative were being orchestrated by Shultz and Veliotes in the State Department.

The next day, Wednesday, Begin called a meeting of the Cabinet to be held the next day in Jerusalem. In the meantime, Weinberger had landed in Beirut the previous day and was to travel to Israel as his next stop. On Wednesday afternoon, I met with Shimon Peres in Tel Aviv at the Dan Hotel; it was the day before the Cabinet was considering the President's proposal. I briefed Peres privately on the initiative which was based on the Camp David agreements and included important policy objectives that we continue to espouse to this day. For example, we said that we did not support an independent Palestinian state, but we would also not support the annexation by Israel of the West Bank and Gaza. The proposal used phraseology drawn from the Camp David accords, but in certain areas, went beyond those understandings; those were the statements to which the Israelis took great exceptions. There is no question that the initiative was a genuine effort to jump start the negotiations and it obviously had been drafted with a lot of care. The details of the plan were less an issue than the matter, the timing of its presentation and the diplomatic activity that surrounded it. Although a well crafted statement of U.S. policy and

a good vehicle for restarting negotiations, it was tactically ill-conceived; it might have had the intended effect had it been floated at the right moment and with better preparation.

On the other hand, the talking points were not well thought out. They became a major part of the tactical problem, at least in Israel. The talking points were basically drafted to convince the Jordanians to enter the negotiations. They were couched in language intended to appeal to King Hussein. Shultz, a careful man of great integrity, did not wish to employ a very normal diplomatic practice; that is when talking to different governments on the same subject, a government will argue for the same substance, but the language to be used is different depending on in which capital the discussions are taking place, in order to tailor the approach to maximize the appeal to each interlocutor. In the case of the Reagan initiative, however, Shultz insisted that same identical talking points be used by all American Ambassadors when presenting the proposal to all Middle East governments. He obviously wanted to avoid being accused of double-dealing. But some of the phrasing of these talking points set Begin on edge. That was another reason that our presentation was tactically deficient and stirred a negative reaction far greater than the substance should have.

The next evening (Wednesday), while I was awaiting the Israeli response, Weinberger arrived at about 5 p.m. Sharon, as Weinberger's counterpart as Defense Minister, was to host a large reception, as was normal, at the Tel Aviv Hilton. I took Weinberger there. We were sitting down having some food and drinks—this was about an hour after our arrival—when one of my staff members brought me cable that he had just picked up at the embassy. It was a message that I was to deliver immediately to Begin, before the Israelis could formulate their formal response. Washington, in this message, was telling Begin that not only could it not delay its unveiling of the initiative, but that the President would make his speech that evening in Washington (the evening of September 1, which would have been early Thursday a.m. in Israel). So the message that I was to deliver was about six hours away from the moment the President would unveil his initiative. I was told that I should tell Begin that the speech could not be postponed because some of its substance

had already leaked out and therefore the President would have to speak at the planned time.

At that moment, I decided that I would not drive to Nahariyya, which would have taken two hours, to deliver the message. Instead, I called Begin and gave him the essence of the message and had the full text delivered by messenger. Of course, Begin was outraged. His Cabinet was not to meet until the next day in Jerusalem, so that he was still on vacation in Nahariyya. When I described Washington's message he became very angry, bitter and cold. He made the point that this was no way for friends to treat each other; he did not feel the Israelis did not deserve this kind of treatment. Begin asked me to report to the President that he was very upset, but that nevertheless, he intended to convene the Cabinet the next day and provide an official Israeli response. Of course, I think the die had been cast by that time and I had no doubts about what the response would be.

Soon after my call to Begin, the Israeli information system went to work. There had been some small leaks in the press about the initiative, but no major effort and some of those leaks may well have originated outside of Israel. But the next morning, the press was filled with extensive and tendentious coverage of the initiative. These were obviously authorized and stimulated by the government. By this time, the Embassy had received the full text of the President's speech as delivered in the early hours—Tel Aviv time. The speech was essentially an elaboration of the letter; there was no reference to the talking points. But the press stories covered the talking points extensively; it had obviously been fully briefed. The tendentious nature of the process—i.e., that Jordan had been consulted earlier than Israel and that Saudi Arabia had been consulted simultaneously (all of the aspects that galled the Israelis)—were made public and were available to the Cabinet while it was considering the initiative. The Cabinet was meeting in Jerusalem; I was with Weinberger meeting with Sharon before the Cabinet meeting; then I attended Nahum Goldmann's funeral on Mt. Herzog in Jerusalem. Then I accompanied Weinberger on a number of visits to such facilities as tank factories and then on a helicopter trip to the West Bank and

the Golan Heights. Weinberger and I ended up in Nahariyya late that afternoon after the completion of the Cabinet deliberations, a Begin press statement and the preparation of an angry rebuttal to Reagan. After he did all that, Begin had returned to Nahariyya to finish his vacation. So late on that Thursday, September 2, Weinberger and I spent a couple of hours until 7 p.m. with Begin. Weinberger caught the full brunt of Begin's displeasure; he got it in spades and I was delighted to be essentially a bystander. Begin listed at great lengths all of his aggravations with the United States and how it had behaved. The list included American treatment of the IDF in Lebanon which would have been characteristic of enemies rather than allies, how we had colluded with the PLO, how we had been plotting a betrayal of Camp David behind Israel's back, how we had consulted with Jordan first and then with Saudi Arabia. It was a great two hours!

Then Weinberger and I flew back to my house by helicopter where I was to host a stag dinner for the Secretary of Defense. I had invited many of the leading Israeli military and politico-military personalities, including Sharon. It was quite an evening; not very pleasant. There was another aspect of this series of events that must be recorded. Unbeknownst to me at the time and only learned later, Begin had, after my first meeting with him Tuesday night, when I gave him Reagan letter and briefed him, met in Nahariyya with Bashir Gemayel, the Lebanese President. Gemayel was one of Begin's prot#g#s and an ally; a relationship that had developed secretly over the previous few years. Gemayel had brought a few close advisors and Begin had invited some Israelis including Sharon. The meeting was secret and attended by very few on both sides. Begin reportedly greeted Gemayel quite brusquely which was very uncharacteristic. He essentially told Gemayel that Israel had now won him the Presidency and had ridden his country of the PLO fighters; it was therefore time to sign a peace treaty. Begin had every reason to believe, based on the years of relationships with Gemayel and the Phalangists, that the Lebanese would now be prepared to sign a peace treaty once Gemayel had taken office. But by now the restrictions of being President had become clearer to Gemayel. He had to find ways to reconcile the Muslims who had assisted him in the expulsion of the PLO. So Gemayel,

although quite polite, tried to tell Begin in unmistakable terms that such a treaty would need time. His message became quite clear soon to his Israeli audience. He gave all the reasons why he had to proceed cautiously, he told them he was not in a position to set a date, he mentioned all the political fence mending that he had to undertake first. This Lebanese position soon got under Begin's skin; he became furious. He then addressed Gemayel in very demeaning and authoritarian terms; he was obviously very upset that his Lebanese allies were not being compliant. He obviously felt betrayed because the Israelis had done so much for the Phalangists and the Christians. That session in Nahariyya changed Gemayel's views of the Israelis; he viewed them as much more sinister than he had before. All the Lebanese were shocked by Begin's behavior to their new President. In fact, I understand that even the Israeli delegation was quite shocked. Dave Kimche was one of the Israelis present at this meeting and he told me sometime later that he was really embarrassed as were others by Begin's tone and demeanor towards Gemayel. Those who participated in the meeting and who later learned of my meeting with Begin just beforehand are convinced that Begin's mishandling of his meeting with the Lebanese—particularly his nasty attitude towards Gemayel—may have been in large part been caused by his anger at Reagan in reaction to my presentation a few hours earlier. The interaction between these two events is an interesting historical sidelight. I think that even if Bashir Gemayel had not been assassinated soon thereafter by a bomb at his headquarters, those who know the Phalangists well are convinced that the Begin-Gemayel relationships would never have been smooth after their meeting in Nahariyya that night. A lot of bad feelings were developed that night by the Phalangists which would be shown later.

On Friday, September 3, I accompanied Weinberger to a meeting with Foreign Minister Shamir. Afterwards, Weinberger made the obligatory stop at Yad Vashem and then toured Jerusalem with our Consul General. I went back to my office at the Embassy to catch up on the work that had piled up during that harried week. Weinberger then held a conference with editorial writers at the Cultural Center. We then flew down to Sharon's farm south of Ashdod for lunch. Sharon was very proud of his farm and often tried to

get dignitaries to visit it so that he could be seen in his country squire mode; he used to butter people up that way and exercise his quite formidable wiles which he could do well when he chose to be ingratiating and attractive. He could be very engaging and that is the persona he displayed to Weinberger that day. He hoped to convince our Secretary of Defense that Israel was now in control of the situation and that together with the United States it was now possible to push the Syrians out of Lebanon and to bring the West Bank and Gaza inhabitants to negotiate on an autonomy regime because the PLO was not in the neighborhood any longer. The lunch went on for a long time—all afternoon as a matter of fact. There were a lot of war stories with Sharon relating all his military exploits. Weinberger handled himself with great style; he was extremely well controlled even during Begin's outburst and the meetings with Sharon, though I am sure, from my knowledge of the man's views, he was hardly taken in by the Israelis; he was not, I am sure, very sympathetic towards either leader.

We returned by helicopter early that evening at about 7 p.m. I went to the office to draft my reporting cables and got home about 10 p.m. that night for a very late dinner. As I mentioned earlier, the Israeli Cabinet had rejected the Reagan plan as a deviation of the Camp David accords. Begin had insisted on drafting the Cabinet statement himself to make sure that it was sufficiently nasty and tough. He made sure that the words would be offensive to us and he succeeded. The cabinet went out of its way to highlight its determination to continue settlement activities on the West Bank; the Reagan plan had called for some kind of cessation. It was the same argument then as it has been up to today. Since 1977, whenever the Israelis get mad at the United States, they proceed with the establishment of a few more settlements just to make the point that they can not be commanded—they are the masters of their own ship and not a U.S. vassal. While the Cabinet was taking its hard-line stance, Peres issued a statement saying that the Reagan plan could be the basis for a dialogue; Arafat, from Tunis, said that the PLO had neither accepted or rejected the plan. Both statements made Begin even angrier. The State Department issued its own press release rejecting Begin's allegation that the U.S. had

violated any commitments about consultations. The press in general and the leadership in Egypt, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and Europe reacted relatively positively to the proposal.

But the pivotal event was about to take place in Fez, Morocco. I learned later that the main stimulus for the timing of the release of the plan by Washington was an Arab League summit meeting that was about to convene in Fez. In the wake of the PLO expulsion from Lebanon, State Department was convinced that the U.S. had to take an important initiative which would show some sensitivity of the Arab point of view. The Department was concerned that unless some preemptive action was taken, the Arab League meeting would reject any further cooperation with the U.S. in seeking a Middle East settlement, as it had done in Khartoum in 1967. That was the main reason for the urgency to reveal the plan publicly. It had the hoped for effect. There was a lot of discussion and criticism of the U.S. at Fez for its alleged bias and perhaps even collusion towards Israel and its Lebanese invasion. Nevertheless, the Reagan plan was sufficiently intriguing to enough members of the League, including Jordan and the PLO, that we, after some vigorous lobbying, were able to head off any formal rejection by the League. Instead the League approved its own eight-point peace plan that had been proposed by the Saudis—the so-called Fahd plan. We found some solace in that plan since it included some features that were close to our position; indeed, even some Israelis saw some merits in the Fahd plan. Unfortunately, the Saudi plan was modified by the League; although the Fez declaration was silent about the Reagan plan, it did not reject it; it merely supported its own approach which was totally unacceptable to Israel. But we achieved our objective by forestalling any Arab League rejection of the U.S. as a peacemaker.

Maury Draper, who had been with Habib during the negotiations with the PLO, now became in effect the main negotiator. Habib had worn himself to a frazzle and had returned to Washington. There Reagan received him with the honors he so well deserved, for it was indeed Phil who was the key player in the PLO's departure from Lebanon. Phil was not only tired, but also ill. He left the area shortly after the PLO's withdrawal and

then stayed in the U.S. for the next couple of months. Draper carried on the work of the American delegation and he and I met Shamir on September 5, a Sunday. We also met with Sharon. We discussed what had to be done to begin the Israeli withdrawal; Sharon reviewed his game plan with us. Shamir told us as well as the press, that there would be no more autonomy talks until the Lebanese situation had been settled to Israel's satisfaction. Both Shamir and Sharon were very tough in the aftermath of the Reagan plan process, although at least Shamir, as always, was polite.

Congressman Steve Solarz was also a visitor over the Labor Day weekend. We hosted him for dinner and Bob Flaten, Paul Hare and perhaps a couple of other staff members and I talked with him until about 1 a.m. briefing him on the recent events and discussing his program. Whenever Steve visited Israel, which was frequent, he worked an 18-hour day and his control officer always needed some leave after Steve's departure to recuperate from the visit. That was also true of some of the rest of us because Solarz insisted on having 18-20 appointments per day; he was always fully up to date, interesting and useful, but he obviously had an extra set of glands that would leave us worn out by the end of his stays. On this particular Labor Day, we had enough work already; we didn't need Steve, but there he was.

On the same day that we were meeting with Solarz, September 6, Washington issued a statement under Shultz' name which was an effort to try to pacify the Israelis. The statement included a provision that any Israeli-Arab agreement would have to include a totally demilitarized West Bank; that was intended to reassure the Israelis that when they withdrew from the West Bank, the vacuum would not be filled by foreign forces. But in the atmosphere then existing, this U.S. position did not win many friends in Israel.

On September 7, the Israelis issued their own public statement calling for Lebanon to sign a peace treaty in order to guarantee the security of its borders; Israel would not fully withdraw until such treaty was signed. Lebanon's rejection of such treaty would force Israel

to institute a special security zone in Southern Lebanon; that is of course what happened and that situation still holds today.

On September 8, while conditions in Beirut remained very unsettled, Reagan announced that the American contingent which was part of the multi-lateral force would be withdrawn beginning in two days' time. On the same day, the Arab League announced its peace plan in Fez, which required Israel to withdraw from all of the territories, including Jerusalem; all the settlements were to be dismantled; and there were a number of other provisions all unacceptable to Israel. The Fez declaration also acknowledged the PLO's absolute right to represent the Palestinians and to govern the West Bank once a Palestinian state had been established on the West Bank with Jerusalem as its capital. It is obvious that the Fez plan was not well received by Begin and his Cabinet. The next day, in response to Sharon's ultimatum to Lebanon about the peace treaty, Shultz said in Washington that the U.S. would support an Israel-Lebanon peace treaty only if Lebanon accepted it voluntarily and not under Israeli pressure. That was just another volley fired in the public arena between the US and Israel; it was just one more indicator of the deteriorating relationship between the two countries. Begin, in the meantime, was accusing American officials and journalists of interfering with Israel's internal affairs by writing articles critical of him and his policies.

At the same time, Israel destroyed some SAM missiles sites in Lebanon which just heated up the atmosphere some more. The U.S.-Israel relationships were just getting tenser. On September 10, the U.S. Marines began their withdrawal. Begin again accused us publicly of interfering with Lebanese-Israel relations. Characteristically, he gratuitously added that we should remember that Israel was not Chile and that he was not Allende. During this period, Mubarak announced, and this was an interesting comment, that he preferred the Reagan plan to the Fez plan; that was well received in Washington. So for a couple of days, public statements were volleyed back and forth, none of them intended to dampen ardors on any side. The Jordanian reaction to the Reagan plan had been guarded; it was not as positive as I am sure Washington had hoped, but at least the King didn't close the

door. We kept urging the Jordanians to support our plan by pointing out the advantages of our approach.

This period was filled for me by a lot of activities related to visitors, including a couple of Congressional delegations, and diplomatic requirements. I saw many Israelis and talked to them about the state of affairs. I was on my last legs; I had not a moment of respite during the whole summer, which had been more hectic than usual. I was worn out; so I decided to take a few days off as soon as I could. I wanted to take off Thursday afternoon, September 16, and take a long weekend in Crete with my wife. I was just going to forget about Israel and concentrate on something else. By his time, Bob Flaten had been in Israel long enough to be handle day-to-day activities of the Embassy.

On Tuesday, September 14, Jordan issued a very encouraging statement in which King Hussein praised the Reagan plan as positive and constructive. The King did say that he couldn't negotiate with Israel unless he had the approval of the other Arab states, which gave the statement an equivocal tone. In the evening of the same day, a bomb exploded in the Phalangist headquarters in East Beirut; I learned about that the following day, early in the morning at around 5 a.m. from a phone call. I was told that Bashir Gemayel and six others had been assassinated by the bombing. Immediately thereafter, as I learned somewhat later, Sharon, upon hearing of the event, ordered his forces stationed outside of Beirut to move into West Beirut to try to maintain order. The troops were also to complete the rooting out of any PLO fighting remnants which Israeli intelligence had reported had been left behind after withdrawal. This was a clean up operation that Gemayel had promised the Israelis that his Phalangists would undertake on their own. But after Gemayel's assassination, Sharon assumed that the Phalangists would not follow through and therefore ordered his own forces into Beirut to prevent the 2,000 PLO fighters he insisted were still remaining and hiding in civilian clothes from exploiting the assassination and from further destabilizing the political situation. It has never been fully proved, but the Lebanese investigations pointed clearly to the Syrians as the perpetrators of the bombing. That seems a logical conclusion since Gemayel was clearly anti-Syrian and was

determined to cooperate with Israel in pushing Syria out of Lebanon. So it was in Syria's interests to eliminate Gemayel. The actual planting of the bomb was done by a Lebanese adherent of the Syrian Socialist movement—a left-wing, pro-Syrian political party. He had been working with Syrian agents for a long time. The Lebanese were never able to put together all the evidence necessary to make the Syrian connection crystal clear, but all the indications certainly tended to confirm Syrian complicity.

We were very concerned with the Israeli forward movement into the city, in part because our rationale for withdrawing the multi-lateral forces only a week earlier had been the assumption that Israel was going to withdraw from Lebanon in the near future; we certainly did not anticipate a further occupation of Beirut. Moreover, Habib had made some commitments to Arafat and the Syrians during his negotiations for the PLO withdrawal that if the PLO fighters were withdrawn, no harm would be done to the PLO civilians who remained in Lebanon. Habib insisted to the end he had acted on the basis of Begin's statements to him about Israel's intentions, and that these commitments had been exaggerated by the PLO. I am sure that was the case. There was probably some implied U.S. commitment, however, which probably led to President Reagan's and Shultz' feelings of guilt after the Sabra and Shatila massacres.

Draper, who had arrived in Jerusalem on the afternoon of September 14, received notification of the bombing soon after I did. He and I met with Shamir and later with Begin to discuss what might happen next in Beirut in light of the devastating blow to Israel's expectations, not to mention those of the Lebanese. The latter had put great faith in Gemayel because he had begun a healing process to bring all the various factions together and had by this time managed to gather considerable popular support from both the Muslims and the Christians.

Draper and I were not told by Shamir or Begin or Sharon that the Israeli forces were moving into West Beirut, although during the day, our intelligence began to pick up the tell-tale signs. Draper helicoptered back to Beirut that afternoon; he returned to Jerusalem

unexpectedly the following afternoon—Thursday—the day when I was packing to go off on vacation. For a period after the Israeli forward movement we were receiving angry messages from the White House to be relayed to the Israelis demanding explanations for their military actions which we felt were a violation of prior commitments. The Israeli Cabinet issued a statement Thursday afternoon saying that their troops would be withdrawn from Beirut only when the Lebanese army was in a position to guarantee the security of the city. Arafat, who was in Rome at the time, demanded that the multi-lateral force be immediately returned to Lebanon to protect the Palestinians who had been left behind. Begin claimed that the IDF had moved into Beirut only after it had been fired upon by Muslim militia, I don't believe that there was sufficient evidence to warrant that excuse.

At 5 p.m. Thursday afternoon, September 16, I joined Maury Draper in a very tough meeting with Sharon; we were trying to persuade him—always a rather feckless proposition—to withdraw the IDF troops then in West Beirut. We argued that the Lebanese army was perfectly competent to maintain order and that the Phalangists certainly also had some muscle still. It was a very nasty meeting; Sharon was disdainful. He was bitter and furious about Gemayel's assassination since with that event his hopes of a having an ally in Beirut had died. He treated Draper in a very condescending fashion. There were some very mean exchanges; it was a most unsatisfactory meeting from our point of view. We did agree that Draper would meet the next day with Shamir and Sharon and if necessary also with Begin. I talked to Begin by phone a couple of times after the Sharon meeting, making the same points. I didn't get much of a response.

I went home to pack for my vacation. The next morning, Sallie and I flew to Athens and then on to Crete. I was absolutely worn out. We had no idea of what would happen next. But I must say that in retrospect, I should have stayed in Israel. As it was, I was gone during the climactic events of the Sabra and Shatila massacres. We were in Crete driving around in a rented car, out of communication.

Word of events trickled back to Tel Aviv on Friday, September 17. The rumor was that Phalangist troops had entered the PLO camps the previous evening, about 5 p.m. or exactly when our meeting with Sharon began. He must have known at the time that the Phalangists were about to enter the camps; he didn't say a word about it. The Americans did not learn about it until mid-day the next day by which time I had already landed in Crete. Draper was seeing Shamir in Jerusalem when the word filtered back. When the first reports reached Shamir, he apparently called Sharon on the phone; Draper was with Shamir at the time. Sharon apparently gave Shamir some double-talk. Shamir's report had come from an Israeli journalist; he had been told that something dreadful was occurring in the camps. The journalist had called Shamir for further information; Sharon denied to Shamir any knowledge, or at least put him off with a misleading comment. Shamir never followed up after his conversation with Sharon. We knew about these events when the Kahan Commission later investigated the massacres. Shamir did not look very good in that report because he had not pressed for further information although he had received additional reports later in the day. Sharon knew well what was going on. What Begin knew and when he knew it is still subject to some debate; his awareness of events was never fully resolved by the Commission.

Sabra and Shatila were populated mostly by the families of the PLO fighters that had been evacuated. There may well have also been some PLO fighters who had stayed behind; there certainly were some who had burrowed themselves into the city. Sabra and Shatila were the two large refugee camps on the outskirts of Beirut and the centers of the Palestinian population of long standing.

Our Embassy tried to get a hold of me in Crete through the Greek police, using our Embassy in Athens. The staff started its efforts the minute the first rumors of the massacre reached them. It took the Greek police two days to find us on Crete, which says something about the Greek police. Frankly, I was not too unhappy because I did get two days' vacation that way. When we were finally found, we took the first plane out to Athens and

back to Tel Aviv. I got back to Israel the following Thursday night, so that I actually had seven days' respite. That week was consumed for others by the Sabra/Shatila massacre and the beginning of the ensuing complications in relations with Israel, Lebanon and the PLO. In fact, the massacres started an incredible chain of events that would last for weeks and weeks.

I don't want to recall the Sabra/Shatila events in any details because history has well covered what transpired. The Phalangists just decided to “clean up the PLO problem” as agreed upon with Sharon. Allegations have been made that they were encouraged by Sharon, although he has steadfastly denied them, particularly during his libel law suit against TIME Magazine. The Phalangists moved into the camps Thursday evening and essentially went through them mowing Palestinian people down, including women and children. There never had been much love between the Phalangists, who were Christians, and the Palestinians, most of whom were Muslim, of whom several hundreds were killed. It was a horrible sequence of events.

The IDF were not in the camps; they were near by in positions which over-looked the camps. It is still not clear how much the IDF troops knew or understood what was going on until the next morning; the evidence is contradictory. It is clear that Sharon was well aware of the Phalangist plans; his troops outside the camps could possibly have been unaware. The IDF was certainly not doing the shooting, but were close enough to stop the slaughter if ordered to do so. In fact, the IDF did not interfere until the following afternoon, after we found out about and brought great pressure on the Israelis to stop the massacres. This issue was the key to subsequent arguments about Israel culpability and Sharon's personal responsibility.

The end result of the refugee camps' events was that the Reagan White House was horrified once informed. The staff began to make it clear that it felt that Israel had at least indirect responsibility for the massacres by in the first place permitting the Phalangists to enter the camps and then not taking any action for at least a day. On September

20, Begin's office acknowledged publicly that the Cabinet had approved the Phalangist invasion of the refugee camps. I am not clear when that approval was actually given. President Navon, horrified by the events, called for an independent inquiry, which was an unusual action of a President who was supposed to be non-political. Begin seemed to be a state of shock; he denied any prior knowledge and said that he had only learned about the massacres on Saturday, which seemed to be somewhat less than credible to many people.

In Washington, the massacre led to a decision to return the peacekeepers. The White House felt very guilty about the withdrawal of the multi-lateral force; it appeared that that had been very premature. The absence of these troops had barred the U.S. or any other outside force from taking any preventive actions. We told the Israelis that we would return the troops, which they accepted, after some discussion, but did not set any timetable for the withdrawal of the IDF. The Lebanese had in the meantime elected Amin Gemayel, Bashir's brother, as President of Lebanon. The vote had been 77-3.

Begin resisted the idea of an independent investigation, although he agreed to an internal investigation. But there was a huge public outcry. Hundred of thousands Israelis demonstrated in the streets against the government, against the massacres. The Israeli public demanded the investigation. The Knesset defeated the proposal for an independent commission at Begin's insistence even though Sharon admitted during the debate that the IDF had permitted the Phalangist invasion of the camps. He also admitted that the Israelis had supplied flares which lit up the camps so that the Phalangists could do their work during the night. But Sharon insisted that his understanding had been the Phalangists were only searching for PLO fighters who had been left behind in contravention to all agreements reached. He insisted that the Israelis never dreamed that the Phalangists would kill women and children. In light of the revulsion about Sharon's actions, there were some resignations by senior officials.

The French were the first to return to Lebanon on September 24, which was the same day that I returned to Israel. On the 25th, approximately 350,000 Israelis demonstrated in a Tel Aviv square, in an anti-government display both for the massacre and for its refusal to have an independent inquiry.

Habib returned to the area, reluctantly, at the President's orders. So when I returned to Tel Aviv, both Habib and Draper were there and we met with Begin and Shamir on the 24th. Our troops did not land back in Lebanon for another few days, but we kept pressuring the Israelis to withdraw their troops from the airport so that our Marines could land there. The Israelis insisted that they had to remain there, but we refused to let our soldiers to intermingle with the IDF which in itself increased tensions. Eventually, in light of the domestic pressure as well as the international ones, the Israelis accepted our ultimatums to withdraw from the airport area. The public pressure also forced Begin to permit the establishment of an independent commission, which was headed by Mr. Kahan, the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court.

I was concerned that our relationship with Israel was going into a final nose-dive. Our meetings with the Israelis were interesting in a way; they were not particularly confrontational. Begin, Shamir and Sharon were so much on the defensive in the public opinion arena that they were trying to be a little more conciliatory towards U.S., which was an unusual reaction. On Saturday, September 25, Habib, Draper, Flaten and our military attach#, Colonel Raines, and I went to Sharon's ranch where we spent the day. We ate lunch and talked about getting the IDF out of Beirut. Sharon went out of his way to try to smooth things over with Habib; they had had a very difficult and nasty relationship over the summer, but by the end of September, Sharon was trying to make amends in an effort to dampen down some of the anger and bitterness. The meetings were somewhat stiff, but they were useful. Yom Kippur was on the 27th which seemed an appropriate time for a day of atonement. Begin started a personal slide down at about this time; he went into a deep depression.

Q: You have alluded to the severe depression that Begin experienced. Tell us more about that.

LEWIS: As I think about the period we are discussing (end of September 1982-Summer 1983), there are about four major areas of my professional life in Tel Aviv that took up almost all of my energies. The first was dealing with Menachem Begin as he entered his state of depression, which ultimately led to his resignation. The second was trying to get the Israelis to withdraw their forces from Lebanon—an effort that Ambassador Habib, Maury Draper and I were very deeply involved in. The third was what happened to the Reagan initiative and the effort to start peace negotiations, which began in early September. The fourth was an upheaval in my official life due to a very bitter personal feud with Ariel Sharon.

Let me start with the Begin story. I didn't really know until later that throughout his life, he had been subject to periodic bouts of depression, followed by a sort of manic phase subsequently. These periods lasted from a few days to a few weeks. By this time, I had already observed him in two or three of these periods. They were very striking phases. Each time, he would become listless; he would lose interest in the kind of detail that he normally found fascinating. He would become very morose. I don't know what his doctors believed about the causes or the origins. He was under medical treatment for other ailments. I was never told that he had ever consulted a psychiatrist, but he may have done so secretly. I never heard any reliable stories if in fact he was under psychiatric care. That Fall, the pressure of public opinion—thousands and thousands of protesters in the streets—forced him and the Cabinet to set up a National Commission of Inquiry, under the chairmanship of Supreme Justice Kahan, to investigate the massacres in Sabra and Shatila and pin-point responsibility if possible. The Commission was set up much against Begin's will. Almost immediately after the Commission was established, Begin went into one of his depression periods. It lasted for several weeks. At the same time, Mrs. Begin, to whom he was extremely close—closer than any other person—was

suffering from emphysema and other serious ailments, from which she had suffered from time to time. She was in and out of the hospital during this period and the Prime Minister was very concerned. He was also very anxious to be invited to Washington to meet with President Reagan to try to rebuild the friendship and the bilateral relationship that the Lebanon war had so seriously tarnished. But he didn't feel that he could leave the country while his wife was in the hospital. At the same time, he was angling for a meeting with Reagan. Eventually, after a couple of months, a meeting was arranged. Yet, Begin was torn about whether he should leave Israel. Mrs. Begin's doctors assured him that her condition had stabilized, that she was not in danger and that he could proceed on his trip. More importantly, Mrs. Begin urged him to take the trip, assuring him that she was fine. I remember that he was still in doubt about the trip even up to the night before he left. He was a tormented man both because of the personal dilemma and his state of depression which had dragged on, leaving him somewhat disengaged from politics. He was always somber when he met anybody officially. But, as I said, he was so anxious for the meeting with Reagan because he was convinced that if he could only sit down with the President, he could convince him that the Lebanon war had been a wise and justifiable action which had forced the evacuation of the PLO from the area and that the Sabra-Shatila massacres were not Israel's responsibility. He firmly believed that he could get the US-Israel relationship back on the high plane it used to occupy.

So he decided to go to Washington in early December 1982. The trip required him to go first to Los Angeles, where he was supposed to give a speech before a huge gathering of the area's Jewish organizations. I had already returned to Washington, preparing for his visit to the Capital which was to follow immediately after the L.A. stop. I met with people in the Department and the White House to prepare for Begin's meeting with the President. One evening—Saturday, I believe—I got a call from someone in Begin's entourage to tell me that Begin had just received a telephone call from Jerusalem transmitting the news that Mrs. Begin had just died. He had received the call about an hour before he was to make his L.A. speech. With his characteristic discipline, he proceeded to give the speech.

But then he returned immediately thereafter to Israel, canceling his Washington visit. I tried very hard to find a way to rendezvous with his plane in New York and accompany him back to Israel, so that I could attend the funeral. But somehow, we were not able to make the connection and I went back separately. I arrived unfortunately after the funeral. The death of his wife was a shattering blow to Begin as you can well imagine. It greatly increased his depression. Mrs. Begin was only in her early 60s at this time; she was not an old woman, but she had been a very heavy smoker and had had emphysema for a long time. I don't remember the actual cause of death, but it was unexpected. The doctors were startled; Begin was devastated. Thereafter he carried a load of guilt because he had been out of the country when she died; he was never able to rid himself of that burden. As is the Jewish custom, he grew a beard for thirty days as sign of mourning. He went into complete seclusion; he saw no one except his immediate family—his son and daughters.

He came back to work in January 1983 with a beard and still in a deep state of depression. He was also very thin. Over the next several months, he tried very rigorously to do his job. He came to the office early in the mornings, he stayed at his desk during the day and went through his papers. He rarely initiated any conversations. He listened a great deal and assented. This state lasted from January to May during which very complicated negotiations between Israel and Lebanon over Israeli withdrawal took place, mediated by Habib first and then George Shultz. Members of the Israeli delegation would visit Begin periodically and brief him; Habib and Shultz did the same thing. He would chair Cabinet meetings and other high level meetings, but he was always very passive. Instead of cross-examining people about the details of the negotiations and getting involved personally as had been his style in drafting Israeli positions, he was almost an observer. Shamir, who was the Foreign Minister, Arens, who became Defense Minister in February and the chief negotiator, David Kimche and other team members carried the ball. They kept Begin informed, but he gave very little guidance. He made no public appearances for months. He didn't speak to the press. He kept the Cabinet meetings going, but they were very short; he did not really participate. He was functioning, but only at 20-30% of normal activity. He

apparently wasn't eating well during this period; he got thinner and thinner until his clothes hung on him, pathetically. His daughter had moved in with him and was looking after him, but he just wouldn't eat.

People became very worried about Begin. He was still in his state of depression. They tried to get him to see other doctors, but he resisted that. His medical records were reviewed by some foreign doctors and he may have been examined by other than his family doctor. He was on some kind of medication for a while, but nothing to make much difference. He didn't snap out of his depression. He was functioning well enough to run the government, but he was well aware of how far below his usual capacity he was. He lost completely his zest for political life. Begin had always enjoyed being Prime Minister. I think I mentioned earlier how pleased he was to become Prime Minister after his many years in the political wilderness. He got a kick out of attending public events, out of chairing Cabinet meetings, out of being “in charge”. But after his wife's death, he lost all interest, and just went essentially through the motions.

Begin's condition made the responsibilities of other government officials somewhat easier, particularly Shamir and Kimche, because he didn't argue with them so much. On the other hand, he didn't provide the kind of leadership that at times they undoubtedly would have liked to have. His state may have made it easier to reach an agreement with Lebanon than had he been in full action.

He seemed somewhat better and stronger towards the end of May and the beginning of June 1983 after the agreement with Lebanon had been reached. His office sounded us out about scheduling another visit to Washington. The White House agreed for around mid-July. But oddly enough, we could never quite pin-down the exact dates. We would propose a time; they would counter-propose, but no time was ever agreed upon; there was some uncertainty in Jerusalem that became more and more apparent. A couple of Israelis told me at the time that they didn't believe that Begin would ever go to Washington. I didn't

accept that evaluation. I knew how much importance he had attached to a Washington visit and a meeting with Reagan and I believed that he would come out of his depression.

During this leaderless period, the Cabinet was divided continually over what Begin viewed as very petty political domestic issues. There was a lot of in-fighting within the Likud. The Cabinet would come to Begin to resolve and arbitrate these minor squabbles. He was totally uninterested; he thought it was ridiculous that they kept bothering him with this stuff. He was upset by the apparent lack of understanding that he was still in mourning and couldn't understand why they couldn't resolve these issues among themselves. He felt very put upon by his own party particularly since he was presented with issues that he wasn't really interested in dealing with. Eventually, a date for a Washington visit was established. Reagan had issued a formal letter of invitation, but Begin had never answered the letter. This was another signal that he was uncertain. About 10-14 days before the meeting, he told the Cabinet that he wasn't going to go to Washington. He told me that he was unable to go. That was the only way he ever explained his change of plans in a message to Reagan; that for “personal” reasons he would be unable to meet in Washington. He left it open for a possible later meeting, but was very vague. It was an obvious tip-off that he had decided to resign, although it was unclear to his colleagues that that had been a decision. Shortly after, on his 70th birthday, which was towards the end of July, he announced his resignation, also for “personal” reasons, to the Cabinet. He didn't make any speech to the country; he just expressed his regrets to the Cabinet that he couldn't continue. They were all up in arms; they were desperate because they felt that without Begin the party would fall apart. It had been his creation; he had been its only Prime Minister; there was no obvious heir-apparent; there was a lot of in-fighting; Likud was already rendered asunder by the Lebanon war with Sharon having been forced out as Defense Minister as a result of the Kahan Commission's report. The events of the previous two years had left the Likud in bad shape. So the Cabinet pleaded with Begin to stay on, but he was adamant. He gave no reason other than he just couldn't continue, although it was quite clear that physically he could have handled the Prime Minister's job. He was in

reasonable physical shape and his mind, even after his wife's death, was as clear as ever. But he had lost his will to continue. He had no inner drive left. Begin had a great sense of responsibility so that he felt that really for many months that he wasn't doing the job he should have been doing. So he had reached the conclusion that it would be better if he resigned.

The party was desperate. They finally persuaded him to defer his resignation while the succession issue was sorted out. August was filled with a lot of scurrying around among the Likud leaders looking for another candidate for the Prime Ministership. Every week, at the Cabinet meeting, Begin would be asked to extend his tenure a little further; he finally realized that the party would not make a decision until he actually left office. He then insisted in submitting his resignation to the President and indicated, although I don't remember how widely, that Shamir would be a logical successor, even if only temporarily while the party leaders fought out their battles. Shamir was not viewed as a heavyweight. He had been brought into the party by Begin in the 70s. He had never been particularly active in party affairs. He had been Foreign Minister for some time and not involved greatly in domestic political matters.

So Shamir was viewed as a stopgap. He was the one person that the other aspirants—Arens, Levy, Sharon, etc.—did not view as a serious rival. So they agreed readily to his succession to the Prime Ministership until a permanent successor could be elected, which they all expected to be within a few months. Of course, Shamir out-foxed them all because eventually he served longer as Prime Minister than any other Israeli except Ben Gurion. He became a much more formidable politician than anyone expected. Begin left very sadly; went into his house and total seclusion. He did not appear for a year. He refused all phone calls; he rejected all press inquiries. An extraordinary event happened on the first anniversary of Mrs. Begin's death when he didn't go to the cemetery. That was an extraordinary omission and showed how deeply immersed he was in an unalterable state of depression.

I spent a lot of time with Begin in official meetings during the 1982/83 period. There were a few times when he would talk to me privately, on a one-on-one basis, on how much he missed his wife and how inadequate he felt, but he didn't “let his hair down” with me; he had never done that. He was a very private man. In fact, his wife was the only person with whom he was totally candid and open. There may have also been one or two of his old cronies. A lot of people have wondered—and have asked me—in retrospect, what had happened. It is my belief that the crucial reason why he never left his state of depression was related to his wife's death, but in a very complicated fashion. In the first place, there was the issue of guilt of not having been at her bedside when she died. In addition, he felt guilty about the Sabra/Shatila massacre, although he refused to admit it. But above all, I think his problem was physiological. During his previous bouts of depression, Mrs. Begin was available to get him out of it. She made sure that he ate properly; she would rebuild his self-confidence. But in 1983, she was not available and there wasn't anybody else to do it. I have also learned from some doctors that when someone is in a deep depression, diet is quite important in determining the length and depth of the disease. The fact that he didn't eat properly and that his daughter couldn't force him to do so, undoubtedly contributed to the extent of that last bout, making it much more difficult to ending or easing it. So it all comes back fundamentally to Mrs. Begin's availability; had she been around, she would have made him eat and she would have convinced him that the country needed him and that he had no alternative except to pull himself together. It was a very, very poignant end to a long political career; in many ways, it was a tragic end coming, as it did, after the momentary triumph of driving the PLO out of Lebanon.

The second major theme for that year was the issue of Lebanon. That is a very complicated story which is not worth retelling in all of its details. It involved several factors: a) after Sabra/Shatila, the U.S. administration had rushed into Lebanon a second wave of an international military force, together with the British, Italians and the French. There was a great American wave of anger against Israel for allowing the massacres to take place. That anger was felt particularly strong by Phil Habib, who, during negotiations

about PLO withdrawal, had made certain oral statements to the Lebanese to be passed on to the PLO to the effect that if the PLO fighters were withdrawn from Beirut, the Israelis had assured him that the Palestinians left behind would not be mistreated. Habib had received those assurances from the Israelis. The Palestinians interpreted Habib's statements to be commitments on behalf of the United States and not only messages from the Israelis. So when the Phalangist troops massacred many women and children as well as some remaining fighters in the Sabra/Shatila camps, the Palestinians blamed the U.S. in addition to the Israelis for allowing the Phalangists to have free rein. Habib felt anger especially since he had passed on the Israeli commitments which he felt had been broken. Thereafter, his ability to function as an intermediary in the Lebanon negotiations was somewhat affected by his new view of Israel and the unreliability of its government. I mentioned earlier that Habib had returned to the U.S. completely exhausted, after the PLO withdrawal and therefore was not in the area when the massacres took place. Morris Draper, who had been in and out of Israel during the last part of September 1982, returned for another series of meetings with Begin and Sharon on October 5. He wanted to discuss the Kahan Commission and the disposition of Israeli troops still in Lebanon. Those meetings in Jerusalem on that day were the beginning of U.S. efforts to negotiate Israel out of Lebanon. Those efforts went on until the final withdrawal in 1984.

As I have said, the initial American effort, led by Draper with whom I worked closely, started in early October 1982. Shamir had made a statement at the UN Assembly meeting that year that Israel expected that all foreign forces would have left Lebanon by the end of 1982. Habib had a meeting with Syrian Foreign Ministry officials in early October, while Draper was in Israel, in which he was told that Syria would take its troops out of Lebanon if and when Israel withdrew its forces from the country. At this point, Syria was feeling very battered. The Syrian Air Force had been overwhelmed by the Israeli Air Force. The Soviets had not come to their aid; no one had. Israel was sitting astride the Damascus-Beirut highway. So in the early weeks after the PLO withdrawals, the balance of power in the area was very heavily weighed on Israel's side—psychologically,

politically and militarily. The Syrians had lost considerable amount of equipment that had not been replaced by the Soviets who did not want to get involved. There were a number of us Americans who saw that Syria at that time was not in a good position to block peace agreement negotiations between Lebanon and Israel. Such an agreement would have permitted Israeli troops to withdraw. So Draper was pressing to get negotiations started while the Syrians were in such a weakened position. He felt even more strongly about starting the process after the Syrian statement to Habib about their willingness to withdraw; that position added a sense of urgency to our interest in starting negotiations.

Sharon was still the Defense Minister at this time. He was determined not to have the negotiation, or at least to have it move on a very slow track. He wanted to find a way to keep us out of it. He always preferred to deal directly with the Lebanese leaders and especially with the new President, the brother of the assassinated Bashir Gemayel. It was really Sharon and his allies who put Amin Gemayel in office; they had been also responsible for Bashir's election in August 1982. Sharon always believed that the Phalangists, who controlled the Lebanese government with the support of the Lebanese troops, were in a position to conclude a peace treaty. He thought he could negotiate that treaty with Gemayel and then present to Begin as the spoils of victory. He knew that Habib and the U.S. were much more concerned with Israeli troop withdrawal and with the protection of the Muslims in Lebanon. The U.S. was interested in a more balanced outcome in Lebanon than Sharon's plan would have brought about. On October 7, there was a radio report that Sharon had announced that Israel would not relinquish control over a twenty-seven mile zone in southern Lebanon, unless security arrangements were negotiated directly with the Lebanese government. Lebanon was insisting that it would not negotiate directly with Israel, even though the Phalangists were Israel's allies. The Lebanese government was still too nervous about Arab opinion to be seen to be negotiating openly and directly with Israel. The U.S. was trying to put together a negotiating process in which we would play the broker's role. Draper spent the first part of October in Israel. We had a series of meetings discussing all these issues.

On the side, the U.S. was trying to follow-up on the Reagan initiative trying to bring together the Palestinians, the Jordanians and the Israelis to try to resolve the future of the West Bank and Gaza. This was another version of the autonomy negotiations. The Begin Cabinet had rejected the Reagan initiative completely, but the Arabs had not. During this period, Hussein and Arafat were having discussions in Amman in which the PLO was trying to get Jordanian backing for a negotiating position, which included the right of Palestinian self-determination, but would not insist on a Palestinian independent state and would agree to recognize Israel within its pre-1967 borders in exchange for a federation of the territories with Jordan. This dialogue between Arafat and Hussein went on for several months. Eventually they reached an agreement, although the Syrians insisted that Arafat could not negotiate an agreement without approval of the PLO Executive Committee. At the same time, Syria said it would recognize Israel if it withdrew all its forces from occupied territories, including the Golan Heights, and if it recognized Palestinian rights to self-determination. The Arafat-Hussein agreement was then repudiated by the PLO Executive Committee meeting in Kuwait. In January 1983, I believe, Hussein gave a formal “No” to the Reagan initiative. Arafat had, on October 12, rejected the Reagan plan, although he did say that it had some “positive elements” in it. Before that, the representatives of the U.S. government were working assiduously in the Arab and Israel capitals to get concurrence to the Reagan plan, while at the same time trying to get Lebanon-Israel negotiations started.

On October 11, Columbus Day, Sallie and I went up to Nahalal in the Galilee to attend a memorial service for Dayan. That was one year after his death—the first anniversary. I remember thinking as we stood by the tomb how much we and Israel had missed him, particularly at this juncture of its history. There was also a memorial service for him in Tel Aviv that we attended on the evening of October 13. Throughout this period, we were engaged in a variety of activities which had nothing to do with the major issues. We took a little diving trip on Sunday, October 17 to the caves of Rosh Hanikra on the Lebanese border. I went with my friend Howard Rosenstein, the Red Sea diver, who had taught me

to dive. The waters in the caves were relatively shallow because they were just under cliffs. They are suffused with light which makes them seem almost like snow climbing; they are a lovely spot, something like the Blue Grotto off Capri, Italy; the water has a very similar light composition.

Shamir was in the United States for the General Assembly meeting in the Fall 1982. I was in Israel. Normally, I did not go to the United States for visits of the Foreign Minister; I saved those trips for Prime Ministerial visits. There was a time honored Israeli tradition that the Prime Minister and the Foreign Minister did not travel together anywhere; that had to do with the internal competition for the spotlight. Shamir met with Shultz on October 13. They agreed that the U.S. and Israel would convene a working group to discuss the withdrawal of foreign forces from Lebanon so that the two countries could have a coordinated approach to this issue and so that both Syria and Israel would withdraw their forces from Lebanon. It was during this period that efforts were being made in the UN to force Israel out of Lebanon as a response to the Sabra/Shatila massacre. Shultz threatened to withhold U.S. contributions to the UN and some of its agencies if the General Assembly were to take any actions against Israel, including depriving that country of its membership in the UN agencies. On the surface, the chances for negotiations seemed pretty good. There were meetings between Arabs and Reagan and others in Washington. In late October, the Israelis permitted the Lebanese forces to take over certain positions in the Shuf Mountains from them in order to maintain the truce between the Druze and the Christians. At the end of October, Draper returned to Israel to start the negotiations. The plan was for him to shuttle between the parties.

Draper met with Begin and me on October 29, after a session with Dave Kimche and Shamir at the Foreign Ministry. Draper made an announcement that Israel and Lebanon had agreed to assemble negotiating teams to start working out arrangements for the withdrawal of Israeli forces along with appropriate security arrangements in southern Lebanon. On the same day, Assad made a public statement in Damascus, restating that Syria would not withdraw from Lebanon until Israel had done so completely. In Beirut,

the American Marines were stationed as part of a multilateral force and were beginning to make some limited patrols and expanding their coverage of East Beirut. Also, on the same day, as a harbinger of the future, a car bomb exploded near Marine positions in southern Beirut, killing one Marine and wounding two Lebanese. That was a sign that the Marines were no longer being viewed as peacekeepers, but as partisans on one side and as enemies by the Muslim side. I had left right after the Draper meetings on October 29 and had gone to the Sinai for my first diving trip there since Israel had returned that territory to Egypt. I went with my old friend David Fridman and a couple of other divers. We crossed the border at Taba and drove to the water. The waters seemed unchanged; the land was different. The multinational force that we had deployed after the peace treaty was in control of the area along the coast. It was a fascinating trip and the diving was superb. It was a good break for me.

I returned to Tel Aviv on Monday. Tuesday I met with Draper in Jerusalem and had a long session with Shamir about moving the negotiations with Lebanon forward. There was a lot of activity during this period behind the scene. For one thing, Israel was developing plans for additional settlements on the West Bank. The U.S. administration in Washington was increasingly dismayed by that prospect and issued a couple of sharp public criticisms. That scenario was replayed in 1992. On November 6, 1982, administration officials put out public statements that President Reagan planned to step up pressure on Israel to freeze West Bank settlements and to withdraw from Lebanon during the meetings that Begin and Reagan were to hold in the near future. From the American point of view, the main justification for the Begin trip was to “talk turkey” to him about these two issues. The meeting, as we now know, never took place. On November 11, a car bomb exploded at the Israeli military headquarters in Tyre in south Lebanon. Dozens of Israeli soldiers and security personnel were killed and lots of civilians wounded. That was a precursor of the attack on the American Marine barracks in 1983. The November incident stirred enormous outrage and concern in Israel. Begin had left for the U.S. the previous day, but Mrs. Begin died three days later and he returned without going to Washington, as I have noted earlier.

I need to clarify why the Lebanon/Israel negotiations were so slow in developing. Draper was very busy flying back and forth between Beirut and Jerusalem. We pressed both parties to get down to business, appoint negotiators, decide on a time and place, etc. We couldn't figure out why it was so hard to get the process started. We got a lot of technical excuses. Draper and I got the distinct impression that he was being “given the run around” especially by Sharon. The big argument was about the location for the negotiations. The Israelis wanted to meet both in Israel and in Lebanon. Then there was a Cabinet meeting about mid-November, just as agreement was about to be reached about the two sites. Sharon suggested during the Cabinet meeting that it would be necessary for the negotiators to meet in Jerusalem when it was Israel's turn to be the host. Jerusalem as a negotiating site was a red flag for the Arabs because of its disputed status. The Egyptians, for example, had been very reluctant to come to Jerusalem for the autonomy negotiations and in the final analysis, did not. When Sharon threw this diplomatic bombshell in the Cabinet meeting, he must have realized that Begin, with his special devotion to Jerusalem as a symbol, would have to agree with him. He must also have recognized that the Lebanese would have found it very difficult to agree to that site and that is in fact what happened. So for the next six weeks, there was a continuing argument about where to hold the tripartite negotiations. The Jerusalem was a very divisive issue, so I suspect Sharon had raised it deliberately to block progress. We only found out in December what had occurred. Then it became apparent that while on the surface Israel seemed to be cooperating on starting the negotiations, in fact Sharon was conducting a private, secret dialogue himself with an emissary of Amin Gemayel. We knew nothing about it. He was trying to make a direct deal with the Phalangists, which would present us with a fait accompli which we would have to accept. It was not in his interest for the formal negotiations to start, while he was working behind the scenes unfettered by our involvement. That is why he introduced the Jerusalem issue out of the clear blue sky.

I had planned to be in Washington with Prime Minister Begin for his meeting with President Reagan in Early November—a meeting which never took place because of Alisa Begin's

death. I had left for Washington on November 12. As it turned out, I tried to return with Begin on his flights when he returned to Israel for the funeral, but we could not make connections. I could not get a commercial flight in time to get back for the funeral. So I decided to remain in Washington for an extensive period of consultation, which I had planned to do in any case after the Begin-Reagan meeting. So I was in Washington November 13-28, 1982 while Maury Draper was continuing to negotiate off and on in Beirut and Jerusalem in an effort to jump-start the Lebanon-Israel Negotiations. He had been blocked by inexorable roadblocks.

While in Washington, I had a chance to see every person in the State Department even remotely involved in US-Israeli affairs. I met with Secretary Shultz, Habib, Veliotes and others. I spent time at the Pentagon and the CIA; I met with various Members of Congress and their staffs. I was in New York to attend a couple of events sponsored by Jewish organizations. All of these contacts gave me a good opportunity to measure the American political climate in relationship to Israel, from the White House down. Since Thanksgiving came during this period, I also had an opportunity to be with one of my children, who was then living in the U.S.

I returned to Israel on November 28. I had reached some clear conclusions, based in part on some informal guidance I had received from my bosses and colleagues. They gave me a sense of a deteriorating mood in Washington resulting from Israeli obstruction to the beginning of Israel-Lebanon negotiations and from the growing anger generated by the renewed Israeli drive for expanding settlements on the West bank and Gaza, spearheaded by Begin and Sharon. This settlement policy was Israel's way to signal its unhappiness with the Reagan September initiative and furthered also Israeli views that the more settlements, the better. It had been my standing practice to brief the press, on background, within a few days after any of my trips to the U.S. I would first brief the Israeli journalists and then, a couple of days later, the American and some British correspondents —particularly the BBC, which had a wide and important audience in Israel. I briefed the press every six weeks or so under any circumstances, but trips to the U.S. gave me an

opportunity to provide a more authoritative sense of the mood in Washington. In part, this was an effort to counter some of the more tendentious reporting that was a normal part of Israeli media content. American purposes and motives were often misstated, usually maliciously, for the Israeli readers.

I held this briefing on December 8 in the afternoon. It was a long briefing; I have had an opportunity to review the transcript. It generated considerable press reaction, including some angry, although veiled, rebuttals from government sources. As usual, I gave the briefing on “deep background”, so that the attribution had to be to “informed sources”. But it would not have been a great mystery for any Israeli who followed politics to figure out who the source might have been—namely me. But by using that briefing technique, I could avoid a possible diplomatic confrontation that might have been difficult to deal with, once the government had reacted. I did not brief on instructions from Washington. My colleagues in the Department knew that I followed a pattern of briefings and never tried to discourage me from that course.

The main subject of the briefing centered on a number of allegations that were almost omni-present in public discourse in Israel at the time. Allegations were being made that the U.S. was trying to steal the fruits of Israel's victory in Lebanon by opposing a peace treaty which would have essentially upheld the status quo. That was a line promulgated by Sharon and his supporters. Another allegation was that the U.S. was blocking the beginning of negotiations between Israel and Lebanon because we wanted to have the Reagan plan accepted by King Hussein first. There was also a good deal of concern about a Congressional proposal to add $1 billion to the Israeli assistance package for FY 84, despite the fact that the administration had requested just a modest increase. Understandably, the administration had opposed the Congressional initiative because it would have required offset cuts in other assistance programs and because such a huge increase might be interpreted as rewarding Israel which at the time was not in a mood to cooperate on the negotiating process; we were also concerned that the new aid package would discourage the Arabs from pursuing the Reagan initiative. All of these concerns

had essentially been acknowledged in various statements made in Washington, both on the record or on “background”. The charge that the U.S. was trying to pressure Israel into accepting the U.S. strategy through the foreign assistance package was made often in Israeli circles. I tried, in the backgrounder, to deal with all these issues; I went in each of them at considerable depth. One of the most ridiculous arguments that I tried to lay to rest was that the U.S. was trying to slow down the Lebanon negotiations. I told the press some of the things I heard in Washington, trying to convey the impressions I had come away with after talking to many people in our government. I did not try to reach my own conclusions, but the press of course reported that the views expressed in the briefings were all mine. Of course, I did in fact pretty much reach the same conclusions, but never said so. I did say that when the U.S. expressed unhappiness about the negotiations it was primarily concerned with some of the procedural obstructions that were being built. I had in mind such things as, for example, Israeli Cabinet insistence that the negotiations had to take place in Jerusalem and Beirut—the two capitals. That requirement was an invitation to blocking any further discussions because it was very clear to the Israelis that the Lebanese would not be able to risk politically conducting negotiations in Jerusalem when no other Arab state had ever done so. I made the point that it was rather difficult for Washington not to be suspicious. We had very belatedly come to understand that in mid-October—at the very beginning of the discussions between Draper and the Israelis on starting the negotiations—the Israelis had at that point adopted secretly that demand that Jerusalem be one of the negotiating sites. We were not informed of that decision; we did not learn of it until late November when it appeared suddenly just as Habib and Draper had completed a package of proposals which they thought would start the negotiations. I emphasized in the backgrounder that this development that caught everybody by surprise did not engender an atmosphere of great confidence in Washington that Israel was very interested in the Lebanon negotiations.

We now know, as I mentioned earlier, that the reason the Israelis were stalling was because Sharon was conducting a private, secret bilateral negotiation with Amin Gemayel

through a Lebanese emissary; he wanted to wrap up the negotiations all by himself in order to keep us entirely out of it until a deal had been made. I think our intelligence was woefully inadequate in this matter; we had no clue what Sharon and Gemayel were up to. We did know of course that the Israelis were stalling; Washington was increasingly upset as the days and weeks passed. I had learned, and I mentioned this to the press which used it in its stories, that there were a good number of officials in Washington who were by this time convinced that, despite everything that Begin had been saying about Israel's interest in leaving Lebanon as soon as possible, the Israelis were planning to stay in Lebanon for a very long time; these Washington officials saw the procedural roadblocks as just another delaying tactic in discussions of Israeli troop withdrawals. Washington also suspected that, by stalling the Lebanese negotiations, Israel was making it impossible for us to pursue the Reagan initiative because it had been clear between September and December that King Hussein, while not having rejected the plan, was trying, eventually unsuccessfully, to obtain Arafat's agreement to incorporate PLO participation in the Jordanian negotiating team. The King had told us directly that it was very difficult for him to enter broader negotiations under the Reagan plan until there was some good faith sign that Israel would withdraw from Lebanon. He needed that sign for his own political survival. The Israelis knew this which heightened the Washington suspicions. So Washington felt that the Israelis were stalling both to continue their occupation of Lebanon and as a way of forestalling the Reagan initiative. I highlighted all of these factors in the backgrounder.

The backgrounder produced some very accurate reports in The Jerusalem Post and several Hebrew language papers. Of course, there were also tendentious reactions. There were some tortuous and angry rebuttal stories. Once again, I was brushed with my old nickname “The High Commissioner”, who was telling Israel how to run its affairs. On the whole, I believe the stories had a very salutary effect. A number of Israelis, particularly in the center and on the left, who picked up the same themes and began to argue publicly that it wasn't really necessary for the negotiations to take place in Jerusalem; they could proceed elsewhere.

This is the background that Habib found when he returned to the area. He arrived mid-December and brought with him another package of procedural proposals to try to break the impasse. He was strongly supported by President Reagan and Secretary Shultz who were anxious to see some progress. First, Habib, Draper and I held meetings with a number of senior Israeli officials just to cover the ground. Then we met with Dave Kimche and some of his Foreign Ministry colleagues. On the afternoon of December 16, a Thursday, we met at the Prime Ministry for two and a half hours starting at 5 p.m. Habib, Bob Flaten, Paul Hare and I sat in the Prime Minister's conference room, adjoining his private office. Across the table from the American delegation sat Begin, Sharon, Shamir and their staffers. This meeting was set up to permit Habib to lay out formally the proposals that he had developed to break the stalemate. While he was doing so, I looked at Sharon and noticed that he looked like the cat that had swallowed a canary. He looked uncharacteristically benign; in fact I would say that he was smirking. Begin did not respond to the Habib presentation. He asked Sharon to speak. Sharon opened by dropping a bombshell. He described with some glee that negotiations he had been conducting for months with Gemayel's emissary. He described the outline of an agreement he had reached and which had been signed by both the Lebanese and Israeli governments. Sharon concluded by essentially saying that the U.S. was not needed; the deal was done. As far as he was concerned, it only needed to be publicly formalized; he thought that that could be done in the following week. In the course of his discourse, Sharon inserted some gratuitous insults. He was obviously intent on totally humiliating Habib and the American team. It was obvious that Begin knew all about this, but he left it up to Sharon to make the presentation for the Israeli side. Begin, throughout this whole period, was in a state of depression and quite passive in general. He had just finished the month of mourning for his wife's death. He was unshaven and drawn. He was lucid, but not really involved. Shamir characteristically sat and said nothing. The conversation was essentially between Sharon and Habib.

Phil Habib exercised enormous self-control; he showed great professionalism. He essentially said that he would leave for Beirut immediately to verify with Gemayel that an agreement had been reached. If he had confirmation, the U.S. would then support the agreement and provide whatever help might be necessary to put it into effect. On first hearing the outline, we did believe that it sounded something that would be easily sustainable from the Lebanese side. During the meeting, Sharon was called out of the conference room for a phone call. When he returned, he spoke with Begin; the Prime Minister summarized it for us. What Begin said was that there had been a leak about the agreement and that Mariv would run a story the next morning. That bit of news made it even more important that Habib reach Beirut as soon as possible to at least warn the Lebanese that the story was about to break.

What actually happened was an extraordinary sequence of events. Sharon was so triumphant about his diplomatic coup that he had briefed a Mariv reporter, giving him the whole story earlier. The Israeli military censor, when he saw the story, immediately understood that it should not be published; however the source was the Minister of Defense, who was the censor's boss. So he didn't feel he could stop the story. Begin, apparently belatedly, realized, when informed of the leak, that something had gone awry. I don't believe that Begin had any idea of the source of the story. He was savvy enough to know that a premature disclosure might abrogate any agreement reached. For reasons that I don't remember now, it was apparently too late for Begin to stop the story.

The story was indeed published. Amin Gemayel, confronted with the story and its subsequent repetition in the Lebanese press, came under enormous political pressure. He had not prepared his Cabinet or any of his entourage; all that had been done had been done in secret and no one else knew, except perhaps one advisor and the intermediary. So no political groundwork had been done at all, but it was in every Lebanese and Israeli newspaper. This uproar forced Sharon to fly to Beirut on Christmas as a last ditch effort to save the agreement. Within a few days, it became eminently clear that Gemayel could

not obtain approval of the agreement. The more the agreement was scrutinized, the more vulnerable it seemed. The Syrians weighed in as well in opposition to the agreement. When Sharon returned, he reluctantly admitted that he would have to follow the American track and start the negotiations as we had been urging. These negotiations started at Zachle on December 28. Washington was both astounded and furious at this turn of events because it viewed it as a deliberate insult to Habib and the United States in general. The White House was angry; the State Department was angry. The Sharon ploy became one more element in the rapidly deteriorating relationship between the U.S. and Israel. That relationship had improved a little bit in the Fall when Shamir had gone to Washington and had a good meeting with Shultz. As long as it appeared that both governments were moving in the same direction on the Lebanese negotiations, the U.S. was giving Israel the benefit of the doubt.

This story was one of the most illustrative examples of Sharon's hubris, which led him to “shoot himself in the foot”. I doubt that the agreement would ever have been approved publicly. The political pressures would have been too great in any case. But, it is conceivable of course had the major players been more careful and adroit they might have reached a better agreement and an earlier one than the one that was finally reached with the assistance of Secretary Shultz in April.

In any case, with the settlement issue unresolved, Begin's passivity and Sharon's conduct did not help US-Israeli relationships. The Washington attitude was skeptical about Israeli intentions.

I said earlier, that throughout the Fall of 1982, I was working on four major subjects. I have not discussed at any great length the Reagan initiative.

Ever since Begin had angrily and rapidly rejected the Reagan initiative in September, the American administration had doggedly pursued it, trying to have become the center of negotiations. In retrospect, I realize now that there was never any expectation in

Washington that the Israelis would accept it, at least initially. It did reject the idea of a Palestinian state, but it also rejected the annexation of the West Bank territories. There were other elements that were bound to be unacceptable to Begin. But Shultz and his colleagues had convinced themselves that if Hussein were willing to come to the negotiating table under a sort of “Camp David” rubric, as interpreted and expanded by the Reagan initiative—we had always asserted, correctly so, that the initiative was consistent with “Camp David”, although the Israeli disagreed vigorously—then the Israelis would inevitably be forced to look at the initiative once again. That would provide the needed opportunity to start serious discussion about the Initiative. Hussein was the key. Throughout the Fall, Hussein and Arafat carried on a minuet, trying to find a way in which the Jordanians could represent the PLO's interests in any negotiations. They had to find a way mutually satisfactory, which would also be at least acceptable to Israel and the U.S. The Egyptians were anxious for this to happen. Hussein thought, on at least two occasions that he had Arafat's agreement to a formula. Each time, when Arafat tried to get approval from his Executive Committee or the Palestine Council, he was rebuffed and the formulas were rejected. The Syrians put on a lot of pressure on the PLO, where they had considerable influence, against any efforts to start negotiations. It was only in late December that Arafat and Hussein apparently reached some kind of understanding that if a Palestinian state were to be created on the West Bank, it would be a part of a federated Jordan. That at least was an indication that something was beginning to develop on that side, but nonetheless, Hussein, who visited Washington on December 20, while meeting with Shultz, gave a rather pessimistic view of his hopes. During a meeting with Reagan, on the following day, Hussein said quite clearly that he was not prepared to enter the negotiations as long as Jewish settlements were being established on the West Bank and Gaza.

During this whole period, the settlement issue was very much on the front burners. Sometime around December 1, Sharon reinvigorated the settlement drive; the Cabinet announced that it had authorized an additional 31 settlements on the West Bank. That was

an irritant in our relationship with Israel, but it also convinced Hussein not to get involved in the peace negotiations. There was a lot of pernicious stuff going on in Israel during this period, most if not all centered around Sharon and his supporters. The Syrians also strongly opposed Hussein and Arafat getting together on a formula and they managed to torpedo all efforts, although that might have happened under any circumstances. The fact that the two concluded any formula was a small miracle in itself; they distrusted each other enormously. Whenever one of the Hussein-Arafat negotiating sessions was finished, we would immediately receive indications from Hussein that Arafat was one of the most frustrating, difficult, annoying and infuriating men to deal with. We heard a lot about the difficulties the two men had with each other, although we heard more from Hussein because we were of course not in touch with Arafat at the time.

When Hussein came to Washington in December, he suggested to Reagan and Shultz that he was still open to the Reagan initiative; he had not come to any final conclusions. But as long as Israel was not showing any interest in retreating from Lebanon, it was impossible for the King to deal with the initiative. The settlement process, accelerating as it was, was also a stumbling block. We of course also knew that in addition to the two reasons he gave, he was also having difficulties reaching an acceptable agreement with Arafat. Nevertheless, the King kept the door open; it was not closed until April 1983 when he announced that he could not participate in negotiations based on the Reagan initiative. That almost coincided with the time when George Shultz had achieved success in negotiating an agreement between Lebanon and Israel. The American government's attitude towards Israel shifted rather substantially during the February-April period, particularly once the agreement was signed and when it became clear that Hussein would not enter the negotiations. By this time, Sharon was not Minister of Defense any longer; he had been replaced after the Kahan Commission report, by Moshe Arens. That brought a different tone to the relationship.

From April on, the US-Israel relationship was much calmer. Shultz especially had come to the conclusion that the U.S. had to work closely with Israel, especially if the Syrians

were to be blocked who were already showing signs of interfering in the Israel-Lebanon agreement. The US-Israeli relationships grew closer as it became clearer that Hussein would not join the Reagan initiative and that Damascus, contrary to Shultz" expectations, was determined to block the implementation of the Israel-Lebanon agreement.

Now I will return to the Lebanon drama. When President Reagan reintroduced the Marines for a second time after Sabra and Shatila, the Administration had told Congress that it expected the forces to be in Lebanon only briefly. By December, they had been there for four months and nothing seemed to be happening to permit a plausible withdrawal. That situation increased the pressure on the administration to convince Israel to withdraw from Lebanon and to complete the peace negotiations. During December, Sharon returned secretly to Beirut the day before Christmas and Christmas Day, during which he met with Gemayel and other Lebanese leaders in order to push the Israel-Lebanon bilateral negotiations back on track. This effort was way too late and the whole situation collapsed soon thereafter.

After the end of the bilateral debacle, the Israelis realized that they had to find some way to join our negotiating track. We talked to them about procedural matters that had been a stumbling block. We received a number of messages from Washington urging that some movement be evident. When Sharon returned from Lebanon and reported to Begin his failure to make any progress with Gemayel, the Israeli Cabinet decided to accept the terms that essentially Habib had suggested earlier.

On December 26, Israel made a formal statement to the press announcing that negotiations would begin the following day. That was somewhat overly optimistic, but in fact the negotiations did start on December 28 in a suburb of Beirut. The site was a partially shot-up old hotel. David Kimche headed the Israeli delegation with Abrasha Tamir representing the Defense Ministry—i.e., Sharon. He was essentially the co-chairman. The Lebanese delegation was a very complicated one filled with representatives of each major ethnic and religious group—Shia, Sunni, Christians, Druze. The Lebanese were

either officials of the Foreign Ministry or the military, but had practically no authority. Morris Draper represented us, supported by a couple of other U.S. officials. He served as an observer and mediator and catalyst to keep the discussions moving. He may have served as chairman of the opening session. That meant that it took from the end of September to the end of December for any formal dialogue to be launched.

In the background stood the Kahan Commission which was investigating the Sabra/ Shatila massacres. It was expected that it would report its findings by the end of January. That undoubtedly made Sharon nervous since he was bound to bear the burden of any negative comments.

On December 29, I called Simca Ehrlich who was then the Vice Premier and Minister of Finance. He was the leader of the Liberal Party; he was a moderate and not especially vigorous, but very interested in maintaining a working relationship with the United States. I told him that I would appreciate a few private moments with him. I was greatly concerned at the time by the status of our relationship with Israel, which had been very much attrited by the Fall's events. I was especially concerned by Sharon's nefarious influence on the relationship. I knew that Ehrlich was not a great admirer of Sharon's; he had been unhappy for sometime with Sharon personally and with his influence on Begin and the Cabinet. So I met with Ehrlich. I made it immediately clear to him that I had no instructions from Washington, but that I had taken it upon myself to make this call because of my deep concern about the relationships between our two countries. I told him that I had been in Washington in late November and that my consultations there had indicated that my concerns were shared by many others. But I told him that I found it very difficult to repair the situation because so much of the damage had resulted from the various personalities involved and their interactions. We had a frank and personal exchange about the situation and events and about steps that might be considered to improve the relationship. Ehrlich was the first to raise Sharon's name in the conversation. He of course had gone immediately to the heart of the problem without prompting from me. I told Ehrlich that unless that relationship did improve, I was deeply concerned that we would soon run

into some very stormy weather. He concluded our talk by saying that he would try his best to convince Begin to reduce Sharon's influence and actions as one step toward better Israel-US relationships. I mention this meeting here at this point because a year later it figured centrally in my most bitter encounter with Sharon.

I have mentioned earlier that Ambassadors do a lot of unusual things. For example, on December 31—New Year's Eve—soon after my very significant conversation with Ehrlich, I attended a benefit party for the International Variety Club at the Tel Aviv Hilton. American Ambassadors were expected to attend these benefits. This was a particularly interesting one because Variety had managed to obtain the presence of a special guest: Liz Taylor. Sallie and I had the duty to go to the Presidential suite in the hotel to meet the guest of honor and to escort her down to the ball. This one of the periods when she was not married, but she was accompanied by a Mexican businessman, to whom, I believe, she was engaged although I don't think she ever married him. We had met Liz Taylor once many years before but it was just a brief handshake; we had never really conversed with her. But that New Year's Eve we spent a lot of time with her; she turned out to be very different from what I expected. Actually, she seemed to me to be a very sad lady, although she looked very good—she was in one of her thin phases. Sallie and I escorted her down, accompanied by several bodyguards, and arrived in the lobby only to face a throng of screaming people, mostly quite mature looking people. Most seemed to be over 40. There must of been several hundreds of fans just waiting there hoping to touch her or at least get near enough for a close look. It was a rare illustration of the old “movie star” syndrome. Sallie was walking a little behind Liz and me. The bodyguards were all around us keeping the crowd away from Taylor and me. But Sallie, who was not inside the “envelope”, was almost trampled to death by the throng of fans. It was just fortunate that a friend, who happened to be in the lobby, grabbed her and pulled her up on a sofa; that is the only reason she survived. We of course were ushered into the ballroom and escorted to the table; we sat down—the ten who were invited to that table. Everyone else in the room just surrounded the table forcing the bodyguards to form a ring around the table to keep two

or three feet of distance between the crowd and the seated guests. Sallie was not with us; she had not been able to get through the crowd. In the melee, I didn't realize for a while that she had not made it; when I did, there wasn't much I could do in light of the frenzy surrounding us. Eventually, Sallie worked her way through the crowd, only to be met by the bodyguards who wouldn't let her through. It took her about twenty minutes to finally get a seat. I don't think she really enjoyed herself that evening. It was sheer bedlam.

There was another celebrity at the ball that night and that was Brook Shield, the actress, who was quite young at the time. She was in Israel making a film. She and her mother, who went with her everywhere, were at another table about four or five tables away. She received a certain amount of attention, but nothing of course compared to the fan adulation that Elizabeth Taylor drew even though the latter was much older and the former much prettier at that time. During the course of the evening, Shields and her mother came to our table and sort of paid obeisance to the “Queen”. It was quite an evening!

Taylor's Mexican escort was very nice. He was very protective of her and jumped at her every bidding. She was clearly one of those women who from the age of four had never done anything for herself. She always had someone around who waited on her hand and foot; she accepted that as a normal pattern of life. She was really helpless without a coterie to look after her every aspect of daily living.

For the next couple of days, while negotiations were starting in Kiryat Shimona, I was off on other business. Maury Draper was our representative. On the afternoon of January 2, I briefed then senator Paul Tsongas at the residence and a couple of people who were traveling with him. We always had Congressional visitors. In my first year as Ambassador to Israel, two-thirds of the U.S. Congress visited the country, either individually or in groups. In subsequent years, the traffic was not quite as heavy, but I think that practically every Congressman or Senator has been through Israel at one time or other. I always tried to brief them personally, either in Jerusalem or in Tel Aviv, usually at the residence. I got

to know a lot of Members of Congress that way. It was useful for me because I got a good feel for the Middle East political temperature in the Congress.

Solarz must have been in Israel once every six months. He was the most demanding because he was such a fantastic worker. When he would come to Israel, he would want see everybody starting with early breakfast meetings at 7 a.m. and then he would go until midnight every day. He would practically kill his control officer. I would spend a lot of time with him because he was “good value”; I would learn a lot from him during the meetings; he was also very anxious to have our views on current events. So I would spend a lot of time with him. But I can tell you that after a Solarz visit—two or three days—everyone was completely exhausted. He has incredible energy.

On Monday, January 3, 1983, Sallie and I left for Washington to accompany President and Mrs. Navon on the first formal visit ever arranged for an Israeli President. They had insisted that we escort them. Navon had been very anxious for such an occasion and had been angling for it ever since he had become President. Until early 1983, Washington had not been impressed that it had been necessary. We always had close contacts with Prime Ministers and other Israeli officials, but the White House had always been reluctant to host a State visit with a personage who was essentially a figurehead. Navon was an influential player within the Labor Party and a very fine person. Mrs. Navon was a former Miss Israel. The Navons put a lot of stock in getting the State visit invitation before the end of his term which was going to take place the next year. I tried to help with the White House to get the invitation. In the final analysis, Navon got an invitation, but it was not full State visit honors. It was, protocol-wise, the next lower set of arrangements, which for example did not require a Blair House stay nor a State dinner.

So we came with the Navons to help with the East Coast portion of their American tour. We flew on an Israeli Air Force plane, which is the transportation used by Israeli VIPs—not very fancy, to say at least. President Reagan hosted a luncheon for the Navons; there was a big reception, a formal dinner at the Israeli Embassy (hosted by then Ambassador

Moshe Arens), not to mention several meetings, some of which I participated in. The fact that he had an official lunch was very important to Navon. It took a lot my persuasion to get the White House to host the lunch; it finally did, but it was a battle all the way. In fact, the visit went very smoothly and Navon was very happy although undoubtedly he would have preferred a full State visit.

I did arrange for John Hopkins University, which I attended as a graduate student, to grant Navon an honorary degree, which helped the visit greatly. I did that by conspiring with Steve Muller, the President of the University, who was Jewish himself and also someone very sensitive to international nuances. So John Hopkins hosted a big dinner and a ceremony in Baltimore which was greatly appreciated. The Baltimore ceremonies were huge, but lovely and well done. Navon gave a fine speech, followed by a large kosher dinner for several hundreds of guests.

After that, we went to Boston and stayed with the Navons through that visit. Governor and Mrs. Michael Dukakis hosted a very nice reception for the Navons at the State House. That was my first opportunity to meet Dukakis. He was terrific—very engaging, politically savvy. The whole reception was a great success. I was surprised that he did not turn out to be a more effective Presidential candidate because on the occasion of the Navon visit, he and Kitty both seemed to be terrific politicians.

In the meantime, back in Israel, the Kahan Commission had finished its report, although their findings remained unknown, even to the well-known Israeli informal information system. On January 2, there was a story in the press referring to Steve Solarz, who apparently had been in Baghdad in August shortly after the PLO withdrawal from Beirut. The Iraqis released the transcript of Solarz' meeting with Saddam Hussein. Hussein was quoted as saying that “no Arab official includes in his current policy the so-called destruction of Israel, but there is not one Arab who believes it is possible to co-live with such an aggressive and expansionist state”. Those were the words of the man who eight years later would launch an invasion of Kuwait! The Solarz meeting was one of many

conducted by American Congressmen to try to wean Hussein away from the camp of Arab leaders who totally rejected Israel.

Habib was back in Washington while I was in New York with Navon. The President met there with American Jewish leaders and intellectuals. We held a session in Elie Weisel's apartment. We were still in a period during which Israel's image in the U.S. in the aftermath of the Lebanon invasion was very badly frayed. Navon's visit was important not only for the contacts he made with American leaders, but also for his portrayal of an Israeli leader so different from Begin and Sharon. He was a left-wing Liberal Party member, known for his strong support of Israel-Arab co-existence. He spoke fluent Arabic—he taught Arabic at one point in his career. So his meeting with American leadership and the press did have a useful effect in that it brought a different image of Israeli leadership. That was one of the reasons why I was happy to assist in the arrangements for Navon's visit.

In New York, Navon gave a speech to the Council of Foreign Relations. Then he left for a tour of the United States and I returned to Washington. As I said, Habib had been there and had been instructed by Reagan to return to the Middle East in the hopes of accelerating the negotiating process. I met with George Shultz and Cap Weinberger and Fred Ikl# and then returned to Tel Aviv on January 11.

Upon my arrival the next day, I went directly to Jerusalem and had a working dinner with Habib that night at the Consulate General. Habib was to see the Israeli leaders the next day. We met with Begin on January 13 at 11 a.m. Habib conveyed Reagan's concerns and delivered a fairly stiff message, although couched in polite terms. We were pushing for an early resolution of the current situation before any further damage might ensue. Begin said all the right things; he also wanted to expedite the negotiations, but he was still withdrawn and depressed and did not engage much in the dialogue.

Habib then went to Beirut. I had dinner that night with Shimon Peres, during which I briefed him on my Washington consultations and Habib's current efforts. I saw that kind of

briefing for the major opposition party leader as one my roles. Although I was assigned to work with the Begin government, it was important that the Labor opposition party be kept current of the negotiations and especially what we were doing and what our views were. Sometimes Habib would also meet with Peres, but more often those briefings were left to me. Begin knew what I was doing, although he was not enthusiastic about the process. As I said, we felt it was important to be even handed with both major Israeli parties. Labor was much opposed to Begin's Lebanon policy so that our views had a much more sympathetic audience there than with the Likud. But Labor did not have any influence on government policies. So I used to meet with Peres during this long period at least once a week just to keep him apprized.

Moshe Arens was the Israeli Ambassador in Washington. Although he was hard-liner, he was well acquainted with American practices and views and managed to always put the best face on Israeli policies and actions, even though sometimes that was a very tough assignment. He was highly regarded and fully trusted by Begin. He was a very useful communications channel.

The negotiations dragged on through January. Habib shuttled in and out of Beirut, but did not participate directly in the formal negotiations. That was left to Morris Draper. The level of the negotiators was below Habib's, made up essentially of technical people; no Ministers were involved. Habib would coordinate with Draper; he would talk to Amin Gemayel in Beirut and with Begin and Sharon in Jerusalem. He would push both sides to show greater flexibility; he would try to sell them on some compromises. The formal talks took place on a home-to-home basis—once in Beirut and then in Kiryat Shimona in Israel.

On January 20, the Lebanese rejected a series of Israeli demands for a security sector in south Lebanon and for some early warning stations to be manned by the Israelis even after withdrawal. This negotiation became very complicated; I was not directly involved although I discussed the issues with Habib and Draper in great detail and for many hours before they were discussed again at the conference table. By about January 20, it became

apparent that the negotiations were not getting very far. The conference became stuck on many issues. Ultimately, the bottom line was that the Israelis were, in exchange for withdrawal, demanding an adequate presence to provide an early warning of pending attacks and to influence their southern Lebanese allies to provide some defense against cross border attacks. The Lebanese were resisting these demands. The Israelis were also trying to achieve a political arrangement between the two countries which would have been tantamount to a peace accord without that name. All parties understood that a formal peace agreement would have been too provocative to the Syrians.

Gemayel, if left to his own devices, would have been prepared to accede to Israeli demands. But he was under increasing pressure from Syrian allies in Lebanon and from Syria itself. He did keep the Syrians informed about the status of the negotiations, but did not necessarily seek their approval. This set of circumstances became the subject of debate long after the end of the negotiations which continued for months and months. Eventually, Shultz came to the area at the end of April and took over for Habib. In about ten days, Shultz put a deal together which was called the “May 17” agreement. It included many of the Israeli positions as well as some of Lebanon's. It was actually a pretty good agreement from Lebanon's point of view and certainly a very good agreement for Israel. Unfortunately, it never took effect. Gemayel did sign it, but could not get it ratified by the Lebanese Parliament. Gemayel had been overly confident that Syria would acquiesce and not oppose it. When Assad was briefed on all the details, he made his opposition clear and told Gemayel that he would not permit its approval. He began to apply pressure to his surrogates in Lebanon and intimated the Lebanese Parliament so that ratification was impossible. The agreement was therefore stillborn.

Then came the second-guessing. Were we foolish to think that such an accord would be ratified without Syria's prior agreement? When, in the prior Fall, we first began to discuss the problem of achieving an agreement both in Washington and in Israel, Syria was in relatively bad shape having been battered both by the war and their own losses on the battle fields. The Russians had not yet resupplied the Syrian forces; the Syrians felt

uncertain and vulnerable. Habib had been told by Syrian officials in Damascus on October 2 that Syria would agree to withdraw its troops from Lebanon if Israeli forces were also withdrawn. Moreover, at some time in the Fall, Shultz had been assured by the Saudis that if an agreement were reached between Lebanon and Israel, Syria would not be a problem. The Saudis assured Shultz that Assad would not interfere. Shultz accepted that assurance at face value and based his approaches on that assumption, even though it was clear that the Syrians might well object to some versions of an agreement. He believed that when it came crunch time, the Syrian would back off and accept whatever arrangements might be concluded. We knew that the Israelis, who were demanding a peace agreement, were taking positions that were probably not acceptable to the Syrians. It was clear that the Israeli were pushing so hard for a full peace accord that if we had tried to bring the Syrians into the process as participants, it would have resulted in a stalemate. On the other hand, we thought that if an agreement could be hammered out quickly while Syria was weak and vulnerable, there was a possibility that the Syrians would reluctantly acquiesce and not try to block the arrangements. That was our calculation and I think, even in retrospect, it was a reasonable gamble. That approach certainly had a better chance of success than trying to get the Syrians to agree explicitly during the negotiations themselves to anything that was acceptable to the Israelis. We had very little effective leverage on the Israelis and therefore a very limited opportunity to reduce Israeli demands.

What was probably wrong was the timing. During the long period of stalemate in the Fall, for which Sharon was responsible, whatever opportunity for success we had was lost. The agreement that was finally reached could have been achieved in the Fall, and would have had a far better chance of approval then because Syria was far weaker and less confident than it was six months later. Assad may have felt that he had no choice except to acquiesce, or at least Syria might have been less able to intimidate the Lebanese and thereby prevent the achievement of an agreement. By the time we had reached May, Syria had regained its self-confidence; it had been resupplied by the Soviets permitting Assad to flex his muscle again in Lebanon, thereby reestablishing Syria's prestige and

influence in Lebanon. By May, the chances of Assad acquiescing in something that he clearly opposed, had become minimal if at all existent. The Saudis again demonstrated their inability or unwillingness to influence Syria. Therefore, although agreement was not reached, I do not believe that it was mistake to try to achieve it. I still believe that if Sharon had not been permitted to play his own game during the Fall and had we moved ahead quickly with our efforts as we had wished, the outcome would have been different. Begin's health failure was a large factor because it enabled Sharon to have greater latitude than might otherwise have been possible.

In addition, there was another series of events which effected the eventual outcome of the Israel-Lebanon negotiations. I refer principally to the Kahan Commission report, which took about five months to complete. On February 2, while Israeli and multi-national forces were in Beirut, three Israeli tanks moved from one sector of the city to another on a road that was patrolled by the multi-national force. An American captain, waiving his pistol, tried to stop the tanks. Someone took a photograph of that moment which appeared in The New York Times and some other papers. That episode was viewed in Israel as ludicrous because the Israelis always liked to believe that our two countries had parallel interests in Lebanon. The possibility that one ally was trying to stop another ally was viewed as ridiculous in Israel. In the U.S., that picture had an entirely different meaning; namely that it was evidence of Israeli lack of consideration for the different roles that the two countries had assumed in Lebanon. Cap Weinberger became very exercised about the picture; it fed his anti-Israeli views which were quite substantial by this time.

The Pentagon, based on this event and other similar ones, put out some very nasty stories about Sharon. They probably were based on some truth. He was accused of discrediting our forces by encouraging these episodes. Sharon had always opposed the idea of the multi-lateral forces because he knew that they would limit Israel's freedom of action. That suggests that the Pentagon's allegation may have had basis in fact.

The Kahan Commission presented its findings on February 7, 1983. It placed indirect responsibility on Sharon for the Sabra and Shatila massacres. It recommended that the Chief of Staff, the Chief of Military Intelligence and another senior general be relieved of their commands. Begin and Shamir were both criticized by the report, but were not held ultimately responsible. On February 10, the Cabinet voted 16-1 to approve the recommendations of the Kahan Commission, including the recommendation that Sharon be removed as defense minister. By this time, Sharon had become completely isolated in the Cabinet. He took all the heat for the Lebanese events, although he tried to wrap himself in a martyr's mantle. He therefore was forced to leave his post, although Begin refused to fire him from the Cabinet and allowed him to stay on as Minister without Portfolio. Nevertheless, Sharon's influence on the negotiations was vastly diminished since he was no longer defense minister. Moshe Arens was brought back from Washington (replaced by Meir Rosenne as Ambassador) and made Defense Minister. That one single action signaled the revitalization of U.S.-Israel relations although the improvements came slowly. Also Israel's position in the Lebanon negotiations became more flexible. I am convinced that had Sharon remained defense minister, there never would have been a May 17 agreement. He would have tried to extract the last ounce of flesh out of the Lebanese; he was very angry with them for their abandonment of his bilateral deal. Arens was determined to achieve some settlement. He was on good terms with Shultz and worked much more cooperatively with us in trying to bring the negotiations to a successful conclusion. The fact that Shultz, Begin and Arens got along quite well and with Sharon no longer a looming figure was the key to bringing Israeli-US relationship on track. I have always thought that one important aspect of the “May 17” agreement was that George Shultz, while achieving an agreement which ultimately did not get ratified and therefore did not solve the Israel-Lebanon tensions, did manage as a by-product of his direct role in the negotiations, start to bring the U.S.-Israel relationship back to its pre-invasion levels. It had been badly ruptured by the invasion; and then had become increasingly difficult through a long series of incidents. Arens return to the Defense Ministry also helped to bring the two governments back together so that they could work on achieving common goals. Israeli

approval of the Shultz agreement became the base necessary for the rebuilding of U.S.-Israel governmental ties. This rapprochement accelerated in the latter part of 1983 and in 1984 and 1985.

I was not in Israel on the day the Kahan Commission made its formal submission. I was on one my infrequent, but highly publicized diving expeditions. This time, I had gone to the Sinai on Monday, February 7. I visited our U.S. battalion which was acting as part of the observers' force on the southern part of the Sinai coast. I stayed overnight and then went to Sharm el Sheikh for a dive. I returned the night of February 8. On the ninth, I met with Habib and Kimche on the status of negotiations. Habib and Kimche got along well; as a matter of fact, David Kimche got along well with all of us. He was the Director General of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. He and his deputy, Hanan Bar-on, were two reasonable professional diplomats with whom we dealt with easily and effectively. Kimche was as I mentioned the formal leader of the Israeli delegation to the Lebanese peace talks, but that didn't reduce the influence of the Defense Ministry which was of course very powerful. The Foreign ministry, throughout this period, was a positive influence from our point of view, even though Shamir took a back seat to Sharon. He didn't play much of a role and depended largely on the work of his staff. He was a silent partner throughout this crisis.

We also saw Begin that day and exchanged views on progress. He was still withdrawn and not really engaged.

There were a lot of minor events during the February-April period. I won't recount all of them, but I will mention one that was of particular interest to American diplomats. On April 18, a car bomb blew up our Embassy in Beirut, killing our CIA Station Chief and many others. That was the first clear piece of evidence that our military presence in Lebanon, which was part of a peacekeeping operation, was beginning to be counter-productive. We had become identified as a target for the radical anti-regime forces. That was a major blow to U.S. interests in the region, particularly the destruction of the CIA complex. It destroyed our intelligence gathering capability on Lebanon, leaving us with too little intelligence for

a long time thereafter. It made us very dependent on Israeli intelligence who worked very closely with the Christian Phalangists. Shultz returned to the area shortly thereafter to put the finishing touches on the agreement which was by then close to completion. Habib had by this time lost the confidence of the Israeli government so that he could not bring it to closure. He worked night and day, but he couldn't bring Begin, Arens and Shamir over the last hurdles; they would not trust him sufficiently. That forced Shultz' return; he shuttled for about ten days and brought the negotiations to a successful end. Shultz stopped in Cairo on his way to Beirut and held a conference for those regional Ambassadors who were involved in the process. Among us was Ambassador Paganelli who was assigned to Damascus. He was an outspoken, able and volatile individual, who had been unhappy with our policies toward the area. He believed that we should have been coordinating with Syria all along; he was unhappy that we were talking to Israel and Lebanon but were waiting for Syria until later. He had peppered Washington with his views for some time, but was not getting any positive response. When we met with Shultz, Paganelli, backed up by some other Ambassadors, launched a rather intemperate attack on Shultz' strategy.

He said that even if an agreement were to be reached, it couldn't succeed because the Syrians would block it. He urged that we drop the whole negotiations in part because the chances of success were so small and in part because it was souring U.S.-Syria relations. Paganelli was a serious professional, who talked to the Syrians in tough terms on occasions. He was a diamond in the rough. He had a different perspective because he viewed the situation from Damascus; I don't think he was defending the Syrians just because he was accredited to them. He just the picture from a different angle. Our Ambassadors to other Arab States, like Saudi Arabia, supported Paganelli. Roy Atherton, then our Ambassador in Cairo, and I were the only ones that supported the path that the U.S. had undertaken. Our argument was that we had invested heavily in the negotiation and that we should therefore not now back off and break off the talks, thereby giving Syria and other Arab states a cheap victory, which they would exploit for their own benefit. We further argued that it would be better for the U.S. if an agreement could be concluded,

even if Syria then blocked it; the burden would then be on Assad. Shultz was obviously not in a mood to retreat and became very angry with Paganelli. He later told Nick Veliotes, then the Assistant Secretary for the region, that he thought that Paganelli had been in Damascus too long (he had been at post for a little more than a couple of years) and that he wanted a list of potential successors. Shultz was very angry by this ill-timed intervention. Nick had a very hard time persuading the Secretary over the period of the next few weeks not to replace Paganelli immediately, although he was transferred in June, 1983. The issue was a perfectly legitimate one, but the presentation was ill-advised and too stark, particularly in light of Shultz' personal stake in the outcome of the negotiations. This was Shultz' first trip to the Middle East since taking on the job of Secretary; he had come not only to wrap up the agreement, but with public instructions from Reagan to get the peace process moving once again.

The agreement was signed on May 17. That was not the only issue on our plates. We had arguments about the sale of F-15s to Israel which we had embargoed the previous summer. Shultz promised that once the agreement was signed and approved by the Cabinet, that we would lift the embargo. The Cabinet approved the agreement by 17-2 vote with Sharon and another minister in opposition. Syria, as I have mentioned, immediately raised objections. The Saudis made some noises, but their position was not entirely clear. We kept hoping that the agreement would come into force and were counting on Lebanese reliance on us as well as some hopes that the Soviets would play a positive role with their Middle East allies. We also thought that the Saudis might apply some pressure on Syria, even though the Saudi Defense Minister had publicly said on May 11 that his country would not apply any pressure on Syria—but what is said publicly in the Middle East does not necessarily reflect what is actually done. On May 13, even before the agreement was signed, Syria formally rejected the accords. But the Lebanese Cabinet proceeded to approve it anyway, after considerable pressure from Gemayel, Habib and Shultz. Arafat returned to Lebanon for the first time since the PLO evacuation.

Gemayel was interested in getting the Syrian forces withdrawn as well as the Israeli troops. It soon became apparent that Syria was not very likely to be very accommodating.

We are now in late May, 1983, following the signing of the May 17 agreement between Lebanon and Israel. As I mentioned earlier, one of the immediate consequences of that signing was the lifting of our embargo on the shipment of F-16, which had been produced, but never delivered. The Congress was also busy at the same time trying to increase the Israel assistance levels, which had been blocked by the Administration since the summer of 1982. After the signing of the agreement, the Administration decided it would go along with any increase as long as that did not result in levels available for other aid recipients. That was symbolic of the fact that with the signing of the agreement, the long slide in U.S.-Israeli relations, which had begun 18 months earlier with the annexation of the Golan Heights, had been halted and was going to be reversed. Over the following 18 months, there was a steady improvement in rapport between the Reagan Administration and Israel.

George Shultz, who had spent a lot of time in Jerusalem on the agreement, had developed good personal relations with key Israeli leaders. That certainly was an asset. The antipathy of some of the Washington bureaucracy, especially in the Pentagon, to Israel was somewhat dissipated by the agreement. On the whole, relationships began their upward trend to the customary level.

Q: Did the antipathy in the Pentagon stem from the Services or from the Office of the Secretary?

LEWIS: Some existed in the Services, but the over-all tenor was a reflection of Weinberger's view. Once he became less vociferous, the Services also became more forthcoming.

On May 21, Phil Habib flew in from Cairo to have some meetings with Shamir and others. Then he went on to Beirut. He was in this period still trying to tie up any loose ends and urge the Israelis to move forward with their force withdrawals.

I arrived in Washington on June 8 and attended a large ADL dinner that night. I was sitting on the dais and made a few remarks, although I was half-asleep at the time. The next morning, I started on a round of meetings. Habib and Draper were also in Washington at the time, along with our Ambassadors to Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Lebanon and myself. Nick Veliotes, as Assistant Secretary, chaired the sessions. We did have some meetings with Shultz.

It happened that Eli Salem, the Lebanese Foreign Minister, was also in Washington at the same time. He was meeting separately with State Department officials; I met with him once along with Nick. Interestingly enough, I had known him when we both attended the John Hopkins School for Advanced International Studies (SAIS), but we had not seen each other since, which would have been nearly thirty years. But we had been friendly at SAIS and it was an interesting reunion. Eli is a very able person, anxious to rebuild the Israeli-Lebanese Christian relationship in a durable way, but he was very sensitive to the Syrian pressure and concerned that such pressure might block the implementation of the agreement just reached. He thought that key would be the U.S. ability to persuade Assad to accept the agreement and to withdraw his own forces from Lebanon on the agreed upon time schedule.

A few days later I went to New York to spend the weekend with some friends. Upon return, there were another round of meetings with Shultz and Eagleburger and then I flew back to Israel. That was on June 14. While I was in Washington, Cap Weinberger said publicly that the U.S.-Israel memorandum of understanding on defense cooperation could then be revived. That was not a great inducement to the Israelis at the time, but it was another signal that the U.S.-Israel relationships were changing. Also, just before my departure, the White House announced that Begin would be invited to the U.S. on a working visit

in late July (which, of course, never took place; Begin resigned late in the summer). It was also announced that Habib and Draper would return to the area to continue to work on the troop withdrawal agreements. On June 16, I had a long private talk with Begin in which I relayed President Reagan's desire to bring the relationship back to the pre-war days. I asked him what dates he might prefer for his Washington visit; he told me he would examine his schedule and let me know. He still seemed curiously unengaged, even when discussing his trip, which he had been anxious to undertake. Throughout the Spring and the Summer, he appeared almost frail; he was obviously eating very little. His clothes hung on him; he did look terrible. He was unquestionably depressed, but he did show up at his office every day, in a shirt that looked three sizes too big for him. He had enough energy to go through his schedule. He didn't seem physically weaker, but just plain listless—no spark, just going through the motions. I have to assume that Begin's problems were largely psychological, but that his reduced food intake from lack of appetite was taking a physical toll. Without his wife looking after him, he was just declining. His daughter was living with him, but she didn't have the same influence that his wife had had.

Just after I had returned, on June 21, Sallie and I had gone to Safad in north Israel to spend a weekend; we were celebrating our 30th wedding anniversary. While there, we received word that Simcha Ehrlich, the Minister of Finance and the leader of the Liberal Party—the Likud's junior partner—had passed away. I went to the funeral on the following Tuesday. This was another watershed event because Ehrlich had been one of the most moderate members of the Cabinet; he had opposed the war; he had been a great admirer of the United States. But he was a weak political figure, unable to stand up to Begin and unable to assert himself very effectively. Nonetheless, he had been a useful and friendly interlocutor, particularly about internal Israeli political matters.

Soon after my return, I briefed the Israeli and American press on my trip with special emphasize on the changing mood in Washington. I tried to stimulate some positive stories about U.S.-Israel relationships. On June 26, Habib met with Begin. The feud between Arafat and Assad had heated up again, resulting in a Syrian announcement that

Arafat was persona non grata because of his public statements that had not set well in Damascus. He was ordered out of Syria and left for Tunis. He was not to return to Syria for a long time.

During this period, we had lengthy discussions with the Israelis about the timetable for their troop withdrawals from Lebanon. There were some significant disagreements; we hoped for an early start of withdrawals, particularly from the Beirut area. The Israeli view was that they needed to stay in Lebanon until the Syrian began their withdrawals. They felt that the presence of their troops was important assurance for the Lebanese government that it would not be abandoned to the Syrian troops and the pressure that that would create. We sympathized with that viewpoint, but it was Washington's position that the Syrian wouldn't leave until the Israelis left. It was the old “chicken and egg” argument, which began to seep into the press and we were accused of trying to put the agreement in jeopardy by pressing Israel to move too fast and too far. This was the normal part of U.S.-Israel relations; whenever we had a disagreement we would soon find it ventilated in the press in a rather distorted form. That put us in the position of having to get our version out to the press; sometimes we succeeded, sometimes we did not.

Throughout my tenure, The New York Times and the Washington Post and several other American papers had very good correspondents in Israel. Some of the British writers were good; in general we had a high caliber press corps in Israel. David Shipler wrote for The New York Times—he was outstanding. He was followed by Tom Friedman who had been moved from Beirut; he was also an outstanding correspondent. David Greenlee of the Washington Post and others were very, very good—almost as good as the Times' people. Mike Kubic of Newsweek had been there for about fifteen years and was highly regarded. The American press was very well informed. It got a lot of information from their Israeli journalists friends, but they were quite responsible—much more than the Israeli press. The Americans would check their stories with at least two sources which is something that the Israeli seldomly do. The Americans, if given some accusation about the U.S., would have the decency to call the Embassy to get a reaction before they ran the story; that was not

characteristic of the Israeli press. I dealt with the two groups separately most of the time. I learned a good deal from correspondents, particularly the Israeli ones. I didn't deal much with the British press; I concentrated on the American and Israeli press. I took the view that it was not my job to feed the foreign press, so I didn't give them any interviews and rarely talked to them except on social occasions.

At the end of June, the growing split between the PLO and Syria was graphically demonstrated when the Mufti in Jerusalem issued a “Fatwa” calling for the early demise of President Assad which probably was not well received by the Palestinians still in Damascus at the time. At about the same time, Habib, Draper, Dick Fairbanks and Dennis Ross—then either in Defense or at the White House—visited Israel. Ross became a prominent member of the U.S. negotiating team during 1983. He was very tough on the Syrians, especially, and abetted the already pretty strong anti-Syrian views of many of the American officials.

Coincidentally, another old “Middle East hand”—Henry Kissinger—arrived. He was in private capacity to renew old acquaintances and of course he saw everybody. We briefed him; I attended a dinner that President Herzog hosted for him and Nancy. He delivered the Yigal Allon lecture at Tel Aviv University. I remember it as being pretty boring, not up to Henry's abilities. Abba Eban introduced him. I was sitting in the front row of the auditorium. Henry was talking to someone before the event started when Abba Eban came in and sat down next to me. He started to talk to me and then said: “I have to make a note or two about my introduction”. He pulled out an envelope and on the back of it, in less than one minute, he scribbled down his notes. We continued our discussion. Eban had been very critical of Begin and his policies. He then went on stage and delivered on those absolute short speech gems, which should have been recorded. It was an absolute model of 5-7 minute speech. It was perfectly timed; every phrase delicately structured, witty, insightful. It contrasted sharply with Kissinger's which he read; it was formal, heavy. It was good, but it demonstrated what a great orator can do extemporaneously as compared to other speakers. I of course had seen the Ebans relatively frequently. We saw them socially; they

used to come to the residence and we went to their home. I liked Susie (Mrs. Eban) very much. We liked Abba as well, but he was not really involved by that time in the politics of Israel. So our relationship was primarily social; our conversations covered history often. He still an active member of the Labor Party, but no longer really important. But his views were always lucid and wise; unfortunately he did not fight for his views very strongly and he really didn't have a political base to support him. He was still hoping to return into a Cabinet position, so that he was very careful about what he said in public. He didn't reveal that he had long since concluded that the Palestinians needed to have their own state; many years went by before he could afford to articulate those views publicly. It was something of a death knell for one's career to hold those views in 1983.

Let me just finish this section with a vignette to describe what life was like in mid-1983 as U.S.-Israel relationships were on the mend. Shultz had reported to Reagan that problems were developing in implementing the troop withdrawal agreement. He also mentioned that Syria was being very uncooperative, to put it diplomatically. Reagan then asked Shultz to return to the area, which he did in early July, visiting Saudi Arabia, Syria, Lebanon and Israel. After meeting with Assad in Damascus, Shultz stated publicly that he didn't see any prospect of imminent Syrian withdrawal. In the meantime, the Lebanese had told us privately that if Israel withdrew, even partially, without comparable Syrian withdrawal, the pressure on them might become so great that the whole agreement might be voided. So while we were publicly declaiming that the Israelis had to start withdrawal, Shultz was being told in Damascus that the Syrians would not and the Lebanese were saying privately that the Israelis should not leave too quickly. The contradictions in all of these statements were beginning to make our policies subject to considerable strain, both in trying to explain them and then in having them implemented. Every year, of course, we celebrate the Fourth of July. In Israel, as we do in many countries in the world, we had a large reception on that date. We had become accustomed by this time to having a fairly elaborate celebration. We found that limiting invitations was counter-productive because all who didn't get an invitation were insulted and that we were therefore creating considerable ill

will when our purpose was just the opposite. The American community on Tel Aviv had a separate picnic at the American School, attended by families. The diplomatic reception was largely for Israelis and other diplomats. There were so many Israelis who felt they were due an invitation because of their American connections or their relationships to the Embassy. The longer the Lewis family stayed in Tel Aviv, the greater the invitation list became. By 1983, this was our sixth Fourth of July reception. What started as an affair for 400-500 people, by now the invitation list was at 2,500 with about 2,000 showing up. We managed to fund the costs out of our available representation allowance; the party was certainly not fancy; we just had a lot of hot-dogs and hamburgers, etc. But I had decided that we would make the reception as spectacular as possible; the Marine Guard contingent would go through a full dress drill on the roof of the residence, above the garden where the reception was actually held. We rigged up a searchlight, which shone on them as they presented the Flag. A separate spotlight shown on another gigantic flag, 50 feet by 30 feet. I don't know where it had come from, but we used to hang it on an abandoned water tower, which was right next to the residence on the edge of a cliff. Raising it was quite a feat and our Major Domo almost was killed at least three times getting it up until he learned how it had to be done. When darkness came, with the spotlight shining on the Flag, I would make a short speech of welcome. I also got in the habit of trying to make some political points, with some subtlety, I hope. I would pick a theme and with the help of my assistant find appropriate quotations to illustrate the theme. I used this technique to try to imply more than my actual words said. That year I spoke about democracy and elections—the Israelis were holdings theirs that year. In 1983, the Lebanon war had just been concluded; Israeli domestic politics were very tumultuous. The Labor Party had been accused of being unpatriotic, traitorous for not supporting the war more vigorously. The domestic climate was still disagreeable and unpleasant—one might say nasty. So I delivered a few words about democracy and the right to dissent. I then strung together several quotations about dissent and the lives of people in a democracy. I managed to imply criticism of the government for its disdain for dissent without actually saying so, and our friends in Labor were of course delighted. We had all the leading political actors there: Begin, Peres,

Likud and Labor people. That kind of Israeli audience would always react to comments, especially to any references to Jews historically. So I quoted from Heinrich Heine, who said that since the Exodus, freedom had always spoken with a Jewish accent; that went over very well indeed. Begin had not been out socially since his wife died, except perhaps once or twice. His decision to come to our reception was quite an event. He had of course always attended before and had enjoyed himself staying for an hour or so. But for him to attend in 1983 was a notable occurrence marking the end of his mourning period.

Begin was still the center of attention at the Fourth of July party. He looked better than he had for a long while. He stayed for over an hour, enjoying the fireworks that we always fired off to finish the celebration in the evening. The fireworks were shot out over the sea from our residence's grounds. Everybody was in an upbeat mood in the wake of the Lebanon agreement; they assumed that the Israeli troops would be coming home soon. (Actually it took two years and many more casualties before the withdrawal was finished.) The US-Israel relations were on upward movement again. There was an area of general optimism about the future for the first time in a long time. I remember that everyone that night really felt that the nadir of US-Israel relations had passed and that the future was going to be better. Many of the guests were looking forward to Begin's trip to Washington. As it turned out, as I mentioned, Begin never reached Washington.

I kept asking the government every few days about Begin's travel plans. We had suggested some possible dates, but had not received any reactions. We just couldn't seem to get the dates pinned down. That did seem strange to us, but in retrospect, of course, it was an indication that Begin had already decided to resign. In fact, I think his decision to come to our Fourth of July party was part of his “farewell” strategy; it was going to be his last one. I don't remember exactly when Begin finally told me of his decision not to go to Washington for “personal reasons”, but it was shortly after July 4. Even when he told me that he would not travel, he did not explain why and didn't give any rationale to send to Washington. He apologized; he was very gracious; asked me to tell President Reagan that he was very sorry, but that for “personal reasons” he just didn't feel he could make

the trip at that time. That was also a tip-off that he was not ready to face the kind of public exposure that a visit to Washington would demand, particularly when made in the wake of the Lebanon war. As usual, he would have had to meet with Congress and with the Jewish groups; he would have had to defend Israel's conduct of the past year; he would have had to discuss Sabra/Shatila. He would have to face a number of skeptical audiences. It would have been a tough act, but if he had been totally himself that would not have fazed him. Now, however, while still in a state of depression and lacking enthusiasm for his job, a Washington visit was more than he could face. He never went to Washington again, then or thereafter.

[1983-1985]

The second half of 1984 saw the end of Likud monopoly on Israeli political power for the remainder of my tenure in Tel Aviv. In July 1984, there was an election; it was stalemate. After that election, neither major party could form a government without the other. So for the first time and with great difficulty, the two parties agreed to form a coalition of “national unity”, as it was called. Shimon Peres became Prime Minister. That arrangement resulted from an extremely unusual political deal. The Labor Party, I believe, had one or two seats more than the Likud, but could not muster a majority of votes in the Knesset, even with its allies. Peres was given first crack at forming a government, as leader of the largest party. When it became obvious that he could not put together a coalition without the Likud, he worked out a complicated agreement with Shamir, under which Peres would serve as Prime Minister for the first two years, then Shamir would take over. In the meantime, Shamir would serve as Foreign Minister; then they would exchange jobs. So Peres was the Prime Minister for the last ten months of my tour in Israel.

So 1983-84 was the last year of the Likud political monopoly. It was a terrible year in many respects. It was the year that saw the Lebanon agreement, achieved only after much hard work, unravel together with the complete collapse of U.S. policy toward Lebanon. It was also the year during which I had more nasty encounters with Sharon that I will describe

later. There were other disappointments as well, but the year was certainly an eventful and interesting one for American diplomacy! It was probably the most unpleasant year, along with part of 1982, that I suffered through while in Israel. The most dramatic event in the summer of 1983 was Begin's resignation. I have earlier described his appearance at my Fourth of July party, which was the last major public event in which Begin participated. Begin clung to office for another few weeks, but it was more and more apparent that he was considering resignation.

At the same time, changes were occurring in Washington. Phil Habib and Maury Draper resigned on July 21. Phil was completely worn out and could not any longer effectively discharge his duties as Middle East mediator, in part because President Assad had let it be known that he believed Habib had misled him during the Lebanon war about Israeli intentions. Assad in effect refused to deal further with Habib. When George Shultz visited Damascus in early July 1983, he did not take Habib with him. On July 21, Habib was formally replaced by Bud McFarlane, who at the time was the Deputy National Security Advisor to Bill Clark. McFarlane had earlier moved to the White House from State Department where he had been the Counselor to Al Haig.

Around this time, Arens and Shamir went to Washington together on a trip which launched a new era in US-Israel relations. They had been very cool during much of the Lebanon crisis; they began to open somewhat after the signing of the May 17 Lebanon agreement. Both Ministers had good meetings in Washington. I went back for those talks. There was a lot of discussion about Lebanon and particularly about Israeli withdrawal. Since the agreement had been signed, there had not been much progress on its implementation. It was becoming clear before and certainly after Shultz' visit to Damascus, that the Syrians were not going to allow the agreement to come into effect. They would do everything within their power to undermine it, at least, even if it were not abrogated outright, as they ultimately succeeded in doing. The Israeli public was getting increasingly anxious to have their troops return. The government also was anxious to start withdrawal, but was insisting that it would do so only simultaneously with the Syrians. That was a non-starter.

This withdrawal issue dominated our dialogue for the following ten months. The question was how Israel could extricate itself from Lebanon, leaving behind something better than existed before the invasion—no PLO certainly and a friendlier government hopefully—and do so unilaterally since the Syrians were obviously not in a mood to cooperate. Essentially, the Israel government never found a good answer. The Syrians still have a major military presence in Lebanon to this day.

Bud McFarlane, when he took the Middle East job, viewed the situation from his perspective that was based on his work with Haig and others as well as his close involvement with the Lebanon negotiations while on the NSC staff. He felt strongly that the U.S. needed to be tougher on Syria—a view that George Shultz shared, particularly after his trip to Damascus in July. Up to then, I think Shultz had hoped that Assad could be brought around to permit the implementation of the agreement; he was skeptical, but thought it could happen because he was hoping that the Saudis and others would bring some pressure to bear on Assad. But after the July visit, Shultz became disillusioned with Syria. As an ex-Marine, the Secretary became increasingly disenchanted with Assad during that Fall and Winter and joined the McFarlane camp calling for a stronger U.S. position vis-#-vis Syria. He was even considering bringing military pressure on the Syrians in order to make it difficult for them to stay in Lebanon and perhaps force them to become more accommodating. Shultz and McFarlane tended to have somewhat different views on the handling of Israel. McFarlane was warier in this period of close cooperation with Israel. He preferred to have the U.S. bolster the Lebanese government with overt military support. He did not want to be too closely associated with the Israelis. As time passed, Reagan and Shultz became more persuaded to work more closely with Israel. Both governments were trying to support a very weak government in Beirut, but were coming at the issue from different approaches and sometimes adopting conflicting policy measures. McFarlane made his first visit to the Middle East after having been appointed as special emissary at the end of July, 1983. He went to Lebanon, Israel, Saudi Arabia, Jordan and Syria. He also found Assad unyielding on the Lebanon-Israel agreement.

He didn't get much encouragement in Saudi Arabia; they did not feel that they had much influence in Damascus. As I mentioned before, it was during this period that I was back in Washington for the Arens-Shamir talks which laid a good foundation for reconstruction of closer relationships between the two countries—so badly damaged by the Lebanon war. Arens had begun that process when he was in Washington as Ambassador some six months earlier, particularly with Weinberger and the Defense establishment where the fraying had been the worst. Weinberger couldn't stand Sharon, but he liked Arens. Arens was tough, but straight and polite and he and Weinberger had gotten along well. He was succeeded as Ambassador by Meir Rosenne; he had been the Foreign Ministry's Legal Advisor. Shamir was ideologically tough on the question of the territories, but low key and someone with whom you could have a rationale discussion. So he and Arens made a good team in this reconstruction phase of our relations. They returned to Washington in November-December, 1983; those meetings were really extraordinarily satisfactory and valuable. The focus of both sets of meetings was of course Lebanon, and the efforts to be made by both governments to shore up the weak government in Beirut and the completion of the agreement; both efforts failed in the final analysis.

I returned in time to meet McFarlane when he reached Israel. We met with Begin, Shamir, Kimche and other Israeli officials. The meetings with Begin were interesting, but not very productive because he, although listening carefully, was rather disengaged. McFarlane returned in mid-August with Richard Fairbanks, who had been appointed as his deputy. The only useful meetings were essentially with Arens and Shamir; Begin was clearly not involved in any serious way any longer. On August 28, Begin announced his decision to resign; he told the Cabinet that he was just not able to function as his job demanded. The Cabinet had been hoping for a different outcome. The Likud members almost panicked at the thought of a Cabinet without Begin; he had been such a towering figure for so many years. He had created the Herut movement and had been in complete charge of it for thirty years. The thought that he could be replaced was just unthinkable. Furthermore, there was no heir apparent. Shamir was the senior Cabinet official, but he was not a senior member

of the Herut movement, having been brought in by Begin. (In fact, Shamir had led the rival Lehi (Stern) underground group during the pre-1948 struggle when Begin, a bitter rival, had headed the Irgun.) Shamir had been in the Knesset only since the beginning of the Begin government in 1977. However, he was acceptable to all factions as Sharon was not. The other contenders did not have adequate stature to be considered for the Prime Ministership. The Likud people tried for two weeks to have Begin change his mind; they would not let him retire; they begged him to stay until at least they could sort out over a period of months the question of succession. Begin became increasingly frustrated with his cohorts; they didn't seem to understand how desperate he was to leave. Finally, on September 15, he submitted his formal letter of resignation to President Herzog. A few days later, the President asked Shamir to form a new government. At the time, Shamir recommended a government of national unity, but Likud and Labor were not able to work out all the necessary details and compromises; that had to wait until after the national election a year later.

In Lebanon, events were not favorable for a resolution of the conflict. There were an increasing number of military incidents. There was some heavy shelling on August 29. The Syrian manipulations were becoming increasingly obvious. Opposition to the agreement was being stirred up. Our Marines, who were in Lebanon as peacekeepers, were supplemented by additional forces in September. Two Marines were killed and fourteen were wounded. There were almost daily clashes which our Marines found difficult to manage. Washington was becoming increasingly skeptical about the deployment of the Marines, but the U.S. was committed to supporting the Lebanese government. On September 23, the Foreign Affairs Committee of the House of Representatives voted to authorize the Marine presence for another eighteen months. That resolution was ultimately passed by the whole Congress, after long negotiations on how the Marine presence might conform with the War Powers Resolution.

The whole period between July and September, 1983 was filled with concerns in Lebanon. The Israelis were ambivalent; they wanted to withdraw from Beirut and its immediate

surroundings, back to the Awwali River line. That had been the line that the Israelis had promised not to cross when the invasion was launched. That was about 45 kilometers north of the border. During this period, a quixotic difference now arose between us and the Israelis. We had been calling for Israeli withdrawal from Lebanon almost from the day the invasion began. We had pressed hard for an agreement because that would permit Israel to withdraw in an orderly fashion. But by Summer, 1983 it appeared that the agreement would be sabotaged by the Syrians. We had begun to recognize the Syrians as the troublemakers in Lebanon; they were clearly checkmating all of our initiatives. There were now many in Washington who viewed the Israeli interest in a quick withdrawal—even before the agreement had been formally ratified—as undermining U.S. leverage on the Syrians! These differing objectives generated a strange dialogue between the two governments. McFarlane was involved; I was involved. We found ourselves in the Summer of 1983 in the position of asking the Israelis to move slowly on withdrawal in order to assure that the Lebanese government was fully coordinated so that its troops could follow closely right behind the withdrawing Israeli forces. We were urging the Israelis not to be in such great hurry to pull out, in order to forestall what would be perceived as a great Syrian victory. It was not an easy sales pitch to make after having urged the Israelis for so long to withdraw as rapidly as possible! The Israelis press ran many stories about our efforts to slow down troop withdrawal from the Lebanon morass.

During this period, I was receiving frequent reports over secure telephone about discussions in the White House and in State Department. Charlie Hill, who was Shultz' executive assistant after having been the Embassy Political Counselor, then Israel Office Director and later a deputy assistant secretary, had been authorized by the Secretary to keep me fully informed by telephone about what was happening in Washington on Middle East policy issues.

One of the continuing problems in the Department of State has always been the transmission of information to ambassadors. No one wants to send sensitive accounts, particularly about internecine bureaucratic warfare, by telegram which will undoubtedly be

distributed to more people in Washington than it should be and will be seen by friends and foes alike. So, an ambassador who wants to keep up to date on Washington doings has to be on the telephone with someone in the Department who is knowledgeable. The advent of secure telephones assisted enormously. I used it continually for the eight years I was in Israel. It was particularly valuable at times such as occurred in 1983 when a huge policy chasm opened up in Washington. That chasm went on throughout the Fall and Winter. The disagreement was essentially over the question of how tough the U.S. should be towards Syria. As part of that debate was the question of the amount of military resources that we should devote to the propping up of the weak Lebanese government. Furthermore, there were sharp differences of opinion on the question of the extent of U.S. cooperation with Israel to neutralize Syria. There were many NSC meetings on these subjects along with Congressional consultations. The debate raged for weeks and months. Shultz, McFarlane and often Reagan were the proponents of the “be tough on Syria” school of thought. Weinberger was always on the side of a more cautious approach, he was often supported by Vice President George Bush. They were very reluctant to coordinate any policies with Israel and certainly were very wary of involving any U.S. armed forces in the area. There were many others who also took strong positions on one side or another, but the ones I mentioned were the key players.

This Washington debate would generate long phone calls. I was briefed on the debates taking place. The end of every conversation was always the same; no decision. Increasingly, I felt that Washington was coming to the conclusion that Syria was in the driver's seat, that the Lebanese government was growing weaker and that its armed forces would not withstand the shelling from the Shia militia. To redress this changing balance would have meant a commitment of U.S. armed resources; that choice made decisions very difficult. I was supposed to brief the Israelis on the Washington debates in an effort to coordinate their activities with ours. I was put in a position of essentially depicting a U.S. policy which gradually would lead Arens and Shamir to conclude that Israel would have to reach its own conclusions and take whatever actions it thought appropriate to extract

itself from Beirut, to provide some security on the border by building up its surrogate force in southern Lebanon, and to try to convince the U.S. to coordinate its actions with Israeli ones. But I am sure that it became increasingly clear to Arens and Shamir that the U.S. could not be counted on for much action. McFarlane and Shultz both tried very hard in the Fall of 1983 to bolster the coordination between the two countries. Their views were often well received by the Israelis, but neither in the final analysis represented the U.S. government. Furthermore, the Congress was very lukewarm on supporting any further commitment of U.S. forces in Lebanon.

The continuing U.S. indecision really came to a head on October 23, when the Marine headquarters at the Beirut airport was blown up by a truck bomb filled with explosives, killing 256 Marines. On the same day, another truck loaded with explosives hit the French headquarters, destroying an eight-story building and killing 56 French soldiers. On November 4, the headquarters of the Israeli Shin Bet and Army was also car-bombed near Tyre; 39 were killed in that action and 32 wounded. These attacks on the French, the U.S. Marines and the Israelis were conducted by Shiite terrorists under direction and with the support of the Syrians. In retrospect, that day was the end of any possibility of further U.S. military involvement in Lebanon to shore up the Lebanese government. We did stay until the end of February, 1984. We did, between October and February, become involved in the Lebanese war; we took sides; we were no longer just peacekeepers, but viewed our presence as a bulwark against Syrian aggression. The battleship New Jersey was shelling military positions in the country; bombing missions were authorized; we lost two airplanes; two pilots were downed and taken hostage. Unfortunately, the Lebanese army was not strong enough to assist. The Syrians were not sufficiently impressed by a limited U.S. show of power. We took just enough action to demonstrate a sort of incompetence. Our military actions fell far short of intimidating the Syrians. They just waited us out; by mid-February, after Reagan had just declared that Lebanon was a “vital U.S. interest”, the administration caved in to Congressional pressure. The President one day just blithely announced that we were moving our Marines offshore onto ships, but that we would

continue to be very aggressive and active from the ships! Two or three weeks later, we withdrew entirely. We promised a sort of phased withdrawal plan, allegedly calibrated with more active diplomacy and additional military assistance to the Lebanese government, but in fact, little was done. We essentially left the battlefield. Reagan cut his political losses in preparation for the election to take place in November, 1984. There just wasn't much political support for our involvement in Lebanon, particularly since our policy was failing which, in my mind, was due to the inability of Washington to reach firm, concise and clear decisions. I have never seen a time in American diplomacy when such bitter arguments raged within the government, incapacitating the U.S. government and barring any decisions.

During this period, I talked over the telephone often to Larry Eagleburger, then the Under Secretary for Political Affairs. He was also a supporter of the “tough on Syria” policy; he wanted to use U.S. military force effectively in the area. By mid-August, McFarlane had moved to become National Security Advisor; by this time, he agreed with the necessity of coordinating closely with Israel. In November, Donald Rumsfeld was named special emissary for the Middle East. He toured the region. He also was for being tough and by and large agreed that we had to be much more consistent and coherent in our politico-military actions and policies to support the Lebanese government. But Weinberger was set on getting the Marines out of the area as quickly as possible and he had full Congressional support for that policy. Larry told me on February 11 that “in the last seventy-two hours, we have lost our Congressional base. We made some rather unwise decisions and we couldn't even stand with those.” Even at that late date, he was arguing that some U.S. advantage might be rescued through the offshore presence, although no one else I think shared that view. The military situation in Lebanon was going from bad to worse for the Lebanese government.

There was a key White House meeting with the President on February 15, 1984. The intelligence estimate was that President Amin Gemayel might last only another two or three days. A series of options were laid out for the President, ranging from major

commitment of U.S. forces to Option 3a, which was essentially to let Gemayel do the best he could with the Syrians while we stood by as observers. That option was based on the conclusion that our original goals in Lebanon were no longer achievable. Charlie Hill told me that the meeting produced a decision, more or less, to approve Option 3a. I noted that day that “the Lebanon game is over”. That very day, Raymond Hunt, a distinguished retired Foreign Service Officer, who was the Director General of the multinational observer force in the Sinai, was assassinated in Rome, where he was headquartered. He was killed by three gunmen in a drive-by assassination. He was a good friend; he was, I think, the sixth ambassador or equivalent—all friends—who were assassinated in the Middle East or because of the Middle East during the 1970s and 1980s. We lost too many lives in or for that region.

Gemayel went ahead to annul the agreement with Israel and made the best deal that he could with the Syrians. At that stage, that was probably the most sensible outcome. We tried to sugarcoat the failed policy by saying that we would withdraw in a gradual fashion, etc, but in fact, after February 15, we were no longer active in Lebanon. We abandoned any efforts to force the Syrians to accept the Lebanese-Israeli agreement, which had been negotiated under our auspices.

The whole September-February period—the end of U.S. involvement in Lebanon—is one of the sorriest records of U.S. foreign involvement. First we did not have a coherent policy; second we had too many different judgments of what might be effective and what might not work; third, we were so spooked by the Lebanon war that we did not work smoothly with the Israelis to maximize the assets that we did have in place—which were primarily Israeli assets; and fourth, because Assad is a very tough man, who saw that his stakes in the game were higher than ours and therefore was able to ultimately force us out. It was a sorry period in American foreign policy. I think we all have understood for a long time how tough Assad can be; we may have misjudged our ability to persuade him. We have often vastly exaggerated the influence that the Saudis had on him, despite the fact that they were some of his principal financial supporters. Time and time again, we have tried

to get the Saudis to push Assad in the direction we deemed correct, but I am not sure that they really have tried; furthermore I think Assad is much better at intimidating the Saudis than the reverse. He is very nice to deal with personally, but he is tough and ruthless and nasty.

I should note that during this period I did manage to find some time for scuba diving. I went down to Sinai at the end of July for a dive after returning from Washington.

By the time Peres took office on September 14, 1984, I had been in Israel for more than seven years. I had been convinced for some time that the time had come for me to leave Israel. I tried to stay on as long as possible as long as there was any hope for progress on the peace process. But it became clear that the process had become stalemated. I had told Shultz, probably in the Spring of 1984 that I would like to be relieved of my duties by the end of that calendar year. I would have left sooner if a replacement were available. He said that he would like me to stay in Tel Aviv as long as possible, but I was becoming very fatigued. When Peres finally became Prime Minister in September, in the middle of an economic crisis, my batteries recharged because we had been close personal friends for many years. I decided that it might be quite interesting to stay in Israel at least for a little while longer just to watch my good friend in action. My plans were still to leave right after the American elections in November.

Peres made his first visit to Washington as Prime Minister early in October. That turned out to be a very good visit. I was in a lot of meetings that he had with Reagan, Shultz and others. At the end of the visit, before Peres and I were scheduled to go to New York, he, the Secretary and I had breakfast together—just the three of us—at the State Department. It was a wrap-up session during which the two principals took stock of the agreements reached and decided on how to proceed. I was there to take notes, so that the necessary follow-up actions would be taken. During the breakfast, Shultz told Peres that I was planning to leave shortly after November. He said that he had asked me to remain because he thought that it would be helpful to both countries, but that he understood that I

was tired. Peres jumped right in; they both urged me, in very strong terms, to stay beyond November until a time to be decided later. It was a suggestion that was difficult to refuse; I said that there was no major imperative to my November departure, but I would prefer not to leave the matter open ended. I suggested that we agree to June 1985 as my departure date. I thought that would provide sufficient time to find another ambassador and would provide enough continuity as Peres took control of the government. That is what ultimately happened and why I stayed for a full eight years.

But in that remaining year, something happened that the press at least thought would disrupt my departure plans. It did not do so in the final analysis, but it is worth describing as another illustration of how an ambassador can become entangled in considerable unexpected difficulties by statements made in public fora. In the late Spring, 1984, I had agreed to give an informal lecture at the Dayan Center at Tel Aviv University. This was to be part of a seminar on the peace process “Six Years After Camp David”. I had understood that the seminar would be a closed forum attended only by experts. I was supposed to discuss “Why the Stalemate Occurred After Camp David”. About a week before my scheduled appearance on October 30, I noticed that the press was carrying stories about the seminar, including an announcement of my appearance. I called Itamar Rabinowich, the director of the Dayan Center, to find out what the ground rules were. He told me that originally, it had been his intention to limit attendance at the seminar, but when the press had heard about it, he felt that it had become necessary to open the session to the public. I considered not attending because the issue was a difficult one to discuss under any circumstances and certainly in public. But since I knew that I would be leaving my post relatively soon—although my plans had been delayed at the urging of both governments—I was feeling ready to take on the world. I probably did not consider all the consequences as carefully as I might have. So I agreed to participate. I didn't prepare a text of my remarks; I spoke extemporaneously from notes, as I normally did. I had about five pages of a scribbled outline which would take about an hour to deliver. As I may have already said, the lecture was to take place on October 30, which was also the “Day of the

Americas", the equivalent of our Columbus Day. Every year, on that day the President of Israel hosts a reception at Beit Hanassi in Jerusalem for all ambassadors from Latin, Central and North America. By this time, I was the Dean of the Diplomatic Corps; that made my presence mandatory for two reasons. The reception was scheduled for 5 p.m. The lecture was to start at 3 p.m. in Tel Aviv. If everything had worked out on schedule, that would have given me just enough time to attend both events; so I proceeded. I delivered the lecture, which was extremely well received by the audience. But it produced a mild earthquake in Washington. It was not the text that created the uproar, at least not once we had cabled it in the following day. (I should confess that what I sent in was a slightly edited version of the remarks I had made.) The key sentence in the speech, which caused the uproar, had been reported widely and had reached Washington before my fuller text was sent. I had made a number of very frank comments about President Carter, Bob Strauss and some of the other players in the Middle East peace process. I was probably too frank in some respects. I toned down my comments when the text was cabled to Washington. My text was essentially a commentary on the mistakes made by the Egyptians, the Israelis and the U.S. after Camp David which had led to a complete lack of progress on the implementation of certain aspects of the Camp David framework. Toward the end of my lecture, I realized that I was running late; the session had started late and I was speaking longer than planned. I could visualize President Herzog becoming very upset if I showed up late; he was a real stickler for protocol. So I hurried the tail end of my remarks, trying to bring the analysis into the present; that is to say, two years after the presentation of the Reagan Plan. That Plan by then was certainly moribund if not completely dead although it was U.S. official policy and there were no plans to change it. By this time, the Reagan initiative had been rejected by both the Jordanians and the Israelis. We just left it on the table. In an effort to get through my lecture quickly, I spoke some hyperbole; that is sometimes the temptation for speakers if you haven't carefully drafted the text in advance. So towards the end, I said: "Once Israeli withdrawal from Sinai was completed, there was a brief final flowering between the end of April and the beginning of June, 1982. There were many normalization agreements which had

been signed back in 1980 which finally began to come to life. There were exchanges of delegations planned and the beginnings of new trade agreements. All of this withered and died in the bright, pitiless sun of the Israeli movement into Lebanon in early June, 1982. The Reagan initiative on September 1 was a genuine effort to recreate momentum, to relaunch the Camp David agreement with some embellishments, but fundamentally on the same terms. The timing unfortunately, in my judgment, was abysmal, the tactics of its presentation worse and the outcome, so far, nil." In conclusion, I would go on to say, "there were a lot of mistakes implicit in this record for all three countries..." Then I summarized the major mistakes made by the three governments.

Earlier in the speech, I had also made a reference to Reagan when he became President and the situation existing at the time, which was not well received by the Reagan White House. I said: "One of the big problems that occurred in 1981 was that President Carter was defeated and then President Sadat was shot. That meant that two of the three men who had invested so much in making Camp David succeed were no longer players. Moreover, in our case, President Reagan came in with no personal stake in the success of his predecessor's administration and with a rather different view of the world, which I understand was described this morning by Professor Spiegel (Steve Spiegel had given a talk to the same group in the morning describing the differences between the Carter and Reagan's policies in the Middle East). I think it is quite relevant that the Reagan administration looked at the Middle East differently than the Carter administration. It looked at it in more "East-West" terms, needing more strategic alliances against the Soviets. They never repudiated Camp David. While the new administration had less than a fervent emotional commitment to complete the process, they certainly adopted it and increasingly, as time passed, they saw the virtues of not allowing it to die". That reference to Reagan's "less emotional commitment" to Camp David was picked up and condensed in a couple of the wire stories to read "U.S. Ambassador says that Reagan had less interest in the peace process", which isn't what I said. However, the real problem with the speech was the one sentence: "The timing was abysmal, the tactics were worse and the outcome, so far, nil."

That was a wonderful piece of rhetoric that came out of my mouth spontaneously. I had not thought of it before, but it suddenly came forth as I was desperately trying to finish my remarks to head off to Jerusalem.

The Israeli journalists in attendance, and there were quite a few, didn't find anything very startling in my comments. For them it was all ancient history. Some had heard me say similar things before. Tom Friedman of The New York Times had not attended, but an AP stringer was there. He filed a story highlighting the one sentence. Friedman told me later that he got a call from his editor in New York asking him about “Sam Lewis attacking the Reagan administration”? He said that he didn't know anything about it; he was then told that I had given a speech, parts of which had been reported by the wire services. So Friedman began to call people who had attended and quickly put together a story in a hurry. That appeared in The New York Times the next day, along with other wire stories. They all focused on this apparent attempt by a U.S. ambassador to attack his President's foreign policy—a rare occasion, to say the least. Moreover, I had not considered the timing. I totally ignored that factor, which shows you how far away you can get from the United States when you are in another continent. The lecture was being delivered one week before our Presidential elections, but that fact just did not occur to me. Reagan was way ahead in the polls; no one had any doubt that he would be reelected. Nevertheless, it was a week before elections and the press immediately leaped on my alleged remarks as criticisms of Reagan's Middle East policies. Needless to say, this episode did not improve my standing in Washington. As soon as the wire press reports became available, I immediately started getting phone calls asking me what the stories were all about. I explained the situation and was requested to send the text of my remarks back as quickly as possible. The NEA Bureau, Assistant Secretary Dick Murphy and others, drafted some press guidance for the Department's press spokesman to use. It was very low key, saying that the “offending” sentence had been taken out of context; if all my remarks were read, it could be clearly seen that I had not attacked Reagan and that I supported the administration's policies. Before the guidance could be used to any extent, several

provocative stories landed on Shultz's desk and in the White House. So I also got a frantic call from my friend Charlie Hill. I explained the whole situation and he of course went to bat for me, but he did say that he thought I would be getting some flak out of the White House. Indeed a couple of stories appeared in the following days citing White House sources clearly indicating considerable irritation there with me. There were also stories quoting State Department sources which in essence said that I would probably not remain in Tel Aviv past the elections. There were references to the fact that I had been in Israel for over seven years and it was well known that I was planning to leave my post in the near future. The implication was that since my tour was coming to the end anyway, I had decided not to worry about diplomatic discipline. The totally impromptu and unconscious nature of the event was not totally credible to the Israeli press which by now had built up a mystique about me. The press and the politicians had come to believe that I calculated very carefully every move I made; they could not believe that I would say anything without having given very careful thought and calculation. In this case, that view was not even close to the truth.

Once Shultz read the transcript—the tailored version that I sent in—he became more relaxed about the episode. I think he would have even if he had the full version. Bob Strauss is the one who would have been even more furious than he in fact was, because, while praising him for having been a great negotiator on Panama and the trade treaties, I suggested that he had run into a cultural barrier. He just did not fit the image of a Middle East negotiator that the politicians in the area were accustomed to dealing with. The Texas informal style did not hit a responsive chord in the Middle East with either Sadat or Begin. I said that I thought Strauss would agree with me that he was miscast and in fact, had resigned from the position as mediator as soon as he could do so gracefully. In any case, my comments did not sit well with him; he wrote me a sardonic letter. I tried to pacify him by sending him a fuller version of my remarks that he had not seen; had I sent him the complete text, he would have been even unhappier.

As I said, Shultz, after reading what I had sent in, concluded that my comments had been quite thoughtful and appropriate and that I had been a victim of poor reporting. I later found

out that Larry Speakes, then the President's spokesman, said that Reagan had asked for a text of the speech; I assume that he read it. After having read the text, the Department prepared some additional guidance for Alan Romberg, the Department's deputy press spokesman. That made very clear that Secretary Shultz retained full confidence in me and had high admiration for my diplomatic efforts. That really ended the episode in the U.S. It died down in Israel soon after that. But I felt embarrassed about having slipped up. I wrote a hand-written letter to President Reagan, which I sent to Shultz via Charlie Hill. In my note to the Secretary, I said that unless he had some objections, I would appreciate it if he could hand my letter to the President in the next few days. I tried to reassure in dignified terms the President that I fully supported his policies, which was the truth at that time. I then proceeded being the U.S. ambassador to Israel. A month later, I received a very nice letter from President Reagan which said: “Dear Sam, Thanks very much for your good letter and don't give the problem you mentioned a second thought. I have long since learned that several thousand miles distance plus the press selectivity in reporting excerpts is insurance against getting exercised over anything I read under those circumstances. You know, the truth is, we thought we were off to a pretty good start on the September 1 plan. Then Arafat had his second meeting with the King who did what seemed to be an about-face and everything went on hold. I appreciate all you have been doing. Thanks again for your congratulations and good wishes. Sincerely, Ronald Reagan.” That was a very graceful note and one that I appreciated. That ended that episode.

Despite the prediction of a few of my State Department cohorts, I did not leave Israel right after the elections. I stayed on until the following June, as I had agreed to do with Shultz and Peres. This story shows how useful it is in having the confidence of and good relations with the Secretary of State or the President or the executive assistant. When you make a mistake, and clearly I should have shown greater discretion in the language used in a particular phrase, if people in key positions have confidence in you, you can survive without great difficulties. If on the other hand, these people had been unhappy with my

performance, I would have given them a very good excuse for replacing me quickly. That is also true for the press; if it is “out to get you” it can do so quickly and easily. Fortunately, my relations with American journalists were always quite good; they were generous in their comments about my work to the extent that they wrote about it. The American press in Israel knew me personally; I had always been a good source for them; they certainly were not interested in piling on. That is not always the case.

When Peres took office, he essentially confronted four gnawing problems. In the first place, he faced an economic crisis—raging inflation which in September, 1984 reached almost 1200% annually on a monthly basis. The government was running a budget deficit of over 15%, which was the basic cause of the hyper-inflation. The foreign exchange in the Bank of Israel was dwindling rapidly; the reserves at the time were less than $1 billion —which was very low. Shamir had wrestled with this crisis, but obviously had not made much progress; in fact, the economic situation was deteriorating daily. The second issue was Lebanon. Israel seemed mired in that country; could not leave it, but was almost desperate to leave particularly as casualties to its own troops were rising. Rabin, who became Defense Minister in this government of national unity, devoted himself for the first few months to trying to find politically and military acceptable ways to extricate Israel forces from Lebanon. The third issue was the peace process which was frozen. Peres was very anxious to start it again, particularly with Jordan. The fourth issue was Egyptian-Israeli relations which were very tense and strained. The main sub-issue was the future of Taba, but there were others as well. Finally, there was the general problem of Israel's poor condition in the world after the Lebanon war. Its reputation in the world was very low; it was not improving with the passage of time. Syria was a difficult neighbor that looked increasingly dangerous; there seemed not to be any apparent way to ease that relationship. The Israeli public was in a very sour and nasty mood. The last few years had been tremendously divisive; Israeli governments were being seen as part of the problem and not the solution. There was a real public yearning not only for a government

of national unity, but for a leadership that would heal the divisions and bring the country together again. So Peres took office at a particularly difficult period in Israeli history.

What is not sufficiently remembered is that the government formed in 1984 was not Peres' government. It was a genuine coalition, with Shamir as Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister, and the Cabinet was split 50/50 between Labor and Likud. There was an “inner” Cabinet of ten members—5 Labor and 5 Likud. All major decisions had to have “inner” Cabinet approval. If a Minister was not satisfied with the decision of this leadership group, he could appeal to the full Cabinet, but any issue that was likely to split proponents and opponents along party lines was doomed for failure. The coalition government scheme required that at least some members of one party support the initiatives from the other. It was a formula for deadlock, but interestingly enough, the years 1984-1986 saw Peres and his Cabinet essentially find solutions to all the major problems. He was particularly successful at changing the mood of the Israeli people who once again became hopeful and uplifted and who in turn lowered the temperature of the public political debate which had been extremely vicious in the 1982-1984 period.

One of the main reasons Peres was successful with his economic initiatives was that he was able to play a “good cop, bad cop” role with Izhak Modai, the Likud Minister of Finance. No previous Prime Minister had ever involved himself very deeply in economic policy issues; they had primarily concentrated on political and national security issues. Certainly Shamir never touched economic issues; he left all of those burdens to the Finance Minister. Peres, who had an interest in economic development although not a professional economist, understood that if Modai's stabilization—austerity—program which the Cabinet was slowly tending to adopt was to succeed, he personally would have to do much of the “heavy lifting”. Modai, who had a very quixotic personality, was an anathema to the labor union federation, the Histadrut. He was effective with the business community, but a total economic program to be successful needed to have the support of labor. It needed to surrender for a time its historical periodic wage increases. The government would have to reduce some of its tax collections and the business community would

participate with a number of actions which would help stabilization. Peres and Modai worked remarkably well together; they worked hand in hand for a long period until they had a parting of the ways.

One of the key challenges to make the austerity program successful was to find increased American financial support. That was crucial to stemming the hemorrhage of the foreign exchange reserves. I had just returned from Washington when Peres took office. I met him soon thereafter for a couple of long meetings and made it very clear that he would be welcomed in Washington, even during an American election campaign when normally foreign visitors are not received. But Israel was special and Reagan and Shultz were prepared to receive him; they were prepared to find ways to help Israel in the stabilization program, if Israel showed any willingness to take some tough actions. I told Peres that he should not visit Washington if he were not prepared to commit himself and his government to the austerity measures that were required. He did go in early October, after having received a tentative approval from the Cabinet for a package of measures. Peres had good meetings in Washington. Shultz, as an economic expert, spent considerable time discussing stabilization. He had to be concerned not only with the economic rationale, but with legal and political realities in the U.S. He, with the help of the Secretary of the Treasury and the Department Assistant Secretary for Economic Affairs, worked out the details of how the package might be sold to the Congress, despite Israel's less than shining image in the U.S. and certain legal restrictions. Also the assistance of people like Herb Stein, former chairman of the Council of Economic Advisors and a close friend of Israel, was instrumental. He had great credibility with Congress as a conservative economist. A Harvard professor, Stanley Fisher, was also very helpful; both he and Stein provided very useful advice to the administration on processes that might be used to achieve stabilization. Since they were also individually trusted by the Israelis, their advice was well received by all. We could, through them, criticize the Israeli plans when we felt they were not going to meet their targets unless stronger and more courageous political

actions were taken. Using such an informal, non-governmental channel, made it easier for the Israelis to accept the U.S. advice.

Essentially, the U.S. committed itself to providing a safety net of additional assistance, which would not be drawn upon unless absolutely essential, but that would be made public in order to bolster confidence in Israel and in the world community—the money markets in New York and the IMF particularly. I think, this had been a Modai proposal of long standing; he had been the Finance Minister in the latter stages of the Shamir government. But the safety net proposal became the centerpiece of my discussions with Peres from the beginning of his regime. It was the key ingredient to sustaining Israel's credit rating, which was in danger of plunging. The fact that the U.S. was prepared to come to the financial assistance of Israel—I believe it was approximately $1.5 billion in loans—was of crucial importance to the money markets. This loan guarantee was worked out in some difficult negotiations with Treasury and Congress. The safety net was never used, but it was a vital psychological ingredient in reestablishing confidence in the Israeli business community and the New York money markets. I think that this arrangement was made possible by Peres' personal credit with Reagan, Shultz and other American leaders. Shamir was part of the Israeli delegation as a sign of the bipartisan nature of the Israeli program. Peres was very persuasive during the many lengthy discussions of how Israel would extricate itself from its economic crisis. There were also discussions on the peace process and how that could be revitalized, which was of great interest to Reagan and Shultz.

This period of heightened activity culminated in the Spring. The “package deal” of stabilization measures was approved by all elements of Israeli society in November, 1984. The U.S. safety net assurances went into effect at that time. By January and February, 1985, the package began to unravel. It continued that downward spiral in the Spring. It was very difficult to keep Israeli officials from returning to their more dissipate ways; the budget cuts were deep; the austerity program in general was difficult for the Israeli public and the Knesset to accept; it contained a lot of pain. So in the Summer, 1985, just after my departure, another crisis erupted. That in a way was even more worrisome because

this was the second effort in a process that had already gone awry once. Another series of difficult negotiations ensued in both Washington and Jerusalem. Another package was hammered out and this time it stuck. Within a few months, Israeli inflation dropped sharply. This stabilization program was the great achievement of the Peres era—the 1984-86 period. The safety net was never used; it was only part of the package. The more important ingredient, I think, was the close consultation, advice and concern that flowed between the two governments on how to tame the economic monster. Personalities played a large role; I don't think if Shamir and Carter had been the two leaders or later, Shamir and Bush, such close collaboration would have been possible.

We went off to a particularly nice scuba diving trip towards the end of September. A friend of mine, Howard Rosenstein, who had taught me diving, had bought a live aboard diving boat—90 foot vessel—which he had acquired in Cyprus or Rhodes, had brought to Tel Aviv where it was refitted. He then sailed it through the Suez Canal around the Sinai to Elat—where he was going to berth it, taking diving parties down the Red Sea. He asked Sallie and me to accompany him on his inaugural voyage through the Red Sea, which we did between September 22 and October 1. We did a lot of diving along the way. The boat held 14-16 guests and had several decks. It was a great break from a lot of unpleasantries.

The dismal Fall also saw a change of ambassadors in Beirut. That was a welcomed change. Ever since my arrival in Tel Aviv, I had a lot of problems with some of our ambassadors in Beirut. We had very different perspectives on Lebanese-Israeli relations, as you can well imagine. Bob Dillon, who had been the ambassador in 1981-83 was a solid professional officer—an Arab specialist. He was totally opposed to US-Israeli cooperation in Lebanon. He was in Beirut when our Embassy had been blown up and was in terrible psychological shape as a result. He handled himself with great professionalism, but was certainly scarred by that experience. He was replaced by Reg Bartholomew, with whom I had worked closely during the Ford administration when we were both deputies on the Policy Planning staff. Reg was a very gung-ho, able officer with a politico-military

background. He had considerable appreciation and admiration for Israel. When he arrived in Beirut in October, 1983 he brought a different attitude towards our then existing policy of working with the Israelis in trying to solve the Lebanese mess. I make a point of this change because on November 7, Reg and I went to Rome together to meet with Ken Dam (the Deputy Secretary), Richard Fairbanks, Rick Burt (Director of the Bureau of Politico-Military Affairs) and others. We discussed the Lebanese problem. I had an opportunity to spend many hours with Reg which we spent exchanging information about the views in the respective countries. He accepted my invitation to come to visit Israel as soon as possible to meet some Israeli leaders. I had extended similar offers to other ambassadors in the region, but none ever accepted because of concerns about the reactions from their host countries. Dillon had refused even to consider the idea. We agreed that closer cooperation was needed between Lebanon, Israel and the U.S. on Syrian policy. He also saw the need for US-Israel strategic cooperation in the region which was then reemerging as an important topic in Washington. When Shamir and Arens had visited the U.S. in July, they had begun to touch on this point very lightly in their conversation with President Reagan. They had suggested the need for a more formal strategic cooperation which had been permitted to languish after the earlier abortive effort made in 1981 by Begin and Sharon.

When Shamir and Arens returned to Washington on November 27 for three days, the subject was broached once again, initially in their meeting with the President and then thoroughly with Defense and State officials. It came up again in their later meeting with Reagan. In the course of those three days, a whole new network of cooperation was weaved. For example, they agreed to establish a “Joint Politico-Military Group” which was formally inaugurated in January, 1985. Under the aegis of that group, the military and civilians of both governments would meet periodically to arrange for serious and practical ways to cooperate in case of threats and contingencies in the region. That was a much more elaborate scheme than we had ever considered in the past. Subsequently, this effort turned out to be extraordinarily successful and the mechanisms are still in place today. In 1981, a formal “memorandum of understanding” with little content had been

negotiated; that was soon “suspended” after Israeli annexation of the Golan Heights. This time, Hanan Bar-on, the Deputy Director of the Foreign Ministry and Mendi Meron, the Director General of the Ministry of Defense—who had both been involved in the difficult effort in 1981—were the key representatives who worked out with us the details of the Reagan-Arens-Shamir agreement. The 1984 arrangements were successful because these two men were wise enough not to insist on a charter for the group. The minute an effort is made to record in writing precisely what subjects are to be covered, which are not to be dealt with, what the detailed ground rules are, the broad objectives get lost. In this instance particularly, the broader ambitions of the Israeli military would have been in such conflict with Weinberger's reservations that another failure would have ensued. In the final analysis, only an agreement to establish a group was reached. It was left to the group itself to decide what subjects would be usefully addressed. That formulation was accepted by Shamir, Arens, Shultz and Weinberger. I believe that the avoidance of legalisms and formality enabled this mechanism to succeed; it has become increasingly professional and useful. I credit Hanan Bar-on for having the wisdom to taking this approach and for selling the concept to his government. It had been the Israeli tradition, and Begin would certainly have insisted upon it, to establish such a group under a great rubric of a grand, ambitious document that would have spelled out every last detail. Shamir was less concerned with such legalisms; he was willing to settle for a much more amorphous approach. That group not only became an avenue for cooperation on Lebanese affairs, but was also a forum for discussion of the Soviet role in the area, long-range strategic considerations towards Syria, events and trends in other parts of the world. They even got involved in a discussion of Israeli economic matters. Shultz took the lead in giving good advice and counsel on how to get Israel's inflation under control; he was a recognized expert in economic affairs and therefore had a greater impact than other Secretaries of State might have had. The meetings of that group became important benchmarks.

The peace process had been stalled for a long time, although we were by now trying to rejuvenate it. The Reagan Initiative was tabled in 1982. We were then focusing on

involving Jordan in the negotiations. We did differ with the Israelis on a number of key issues; e.g., further settlements on the West Bank. But late 1983 saw a real change in the relations. In the final wrap-up sessions of the Arens-Shamir meetings, first with Reagan and then with Shultz, the two governments came to substantial meeting of the minds on some of the key questions and how to address our differences. Rumsfeld was also very much involved in these meetings. On the first day of the visit, a working group on Lebanon was established. That was the first time in the tortuous history of the “Lebanon affair” that American and Israeli officials, representing both defense and foreign affairs agencies, sat down together in a working group trying to address, as professionals, the dilemmas that each country faced. Unfortunately, by the end of November 1983, it was far too late for such a dialogue; most of the damage had already been done and there was little to be salvaged. But at least the interaction between the two governments were greatly smoothed.

There was one interesting sidelight that should be mentioned. Rumsfeld was appointed as Middle East emissary—the third in one year—at the beginning of November. He had very little contact with the Middle East. He had been Secretary of Defense, White House Chief of Staff, a distinguished leader of the Republican Party—a very able guy. He headed for the area soon after his appointment. I got a call one day, saying that he would like to meet with Reg and myself in Cyprus, before he formally arrived in the Middle East. It was essentially to be a tutorial session. The Air Force flew Reg out of Beirut, which was still a tricky business because of the military situation. Reg had to fly by helicopter to one of the aircraft carriers anchored off-shore; that was a risky venture because the landing areas were not entirely secure—they were not safe from any missiles that unfriendly hands might want to fire. Thankfully, Reg made the trip safely; the Air Force also picked me up at Ben Gurion airport. We met at the Ambassador's residence in Nicosia for several hours. That was an extraordinarily interesting meeting. Reg presented his views of the situation, I gave an overlook of Israel as I saw it. We discussed what we considered the mistakes of the last few months and the prospects for the future. I made some suggestions

on how Rumsfeld should deal with Shamir when he got to Jerusalem. Rumsfeld was a very good listener. I told him that I had watched Shamir operate for several years with Americans. He was a very slow speaker; most Americans are uncomfortable speaking with someone who is slow in responding. We characteristically are uncomfortable with “dead air” during conversations. So when an American tried to elicit some response from Shamir, he was distressed when he did not get an immediate response; he wouldn't wait, but rather continue, never getting a response from Shamir. So I suggested that when meeting with Shamir, he let some “dead air” occur; if he waited long enough, particularly in a small group, he would find that eventually Shamir would open up and he would get a better sense of his thought process. Rumsfeld accepted that and when he came to Israel, he followed my advice; my impression is that of all the visiting Americans who dealt with Shamir over the many years, Rumsfeld was more successful than all others in engaging Shamir in a real dialogue because he accepted the process that required periods of silence.

There was an interesting result from that Cyprus meeting. In all the years I had been in Israel, I had never gone to Syria, primarily because none of my colleagues in Damascus ever thought it would be a good idea for me to come there. But the Air Force plane in Nicosia was to take Reg back to Damascus—which I think was probably a first for him as well—from whence he would return to Beirut overland. I think that Rumsfeld was going to go with Reg and then return to Damascus later. The plane was stationed at Ben Gurion; so after its stop in Damascus, it was to go on to its home base, with me on board. So I found myself in a U.S. Air Force plane landing in Damascus. An honor guard for Rumsfeld had been mustered by the Syrians, so there was a lot of activity at the airport. Our representatives in Damascus were not anxious that the Syrians know that the U.S. Ambassador to Israel was on board. So while Rumsfeld and Reg and party were disembarking, I peeked through a porthole, trying to see what was going on without being spotted. I watched with some degree of amazement at this mystic place called Damascus which had always been “forbidden fruit” to me. I had a funny feeling of being in Damascus,

but hidden from view—something like a stowaway. In any case, all went smoothly and we took off and I got back to Israel safe and sound. So my first visit to Syria was surreptitious!

I had gone back to the U.S. to accompany President Herzog. I stayed to attend the Shamir-Arens meetings. After that, I went on home leave. So I was absent from the latter part of November until the latter part of January, 1984.

Q: In an earlier part of this series of interviews, you referred to Shultz' unhappiness with our Ambassador to Syria, Bob Paganelli. When did that happen?

LEWIS: That occurred just before the signing of the Lebanon-Israel agreement—early April, 1983. Shultz was on his way to the area, trying to complete the negotiations. Habib had carried them to almost the final stages, but couldn't quite get over the last hurdles. Shultz stopped in Cairo and held a regional ambassadorial conference. It was at that meeting that Paganelli sharply criticized our Lebanese policies and Shultz' approach to the resolution of the conflict. Others joined Paganelli, so that only Roy Atherton, then our Ambassador in Cairo, and I were supporting the plan to complete the agreements, having reached the stage that it had. Paganelli almost got fired after that conference having upset Shultz to considerable degree.

I would like to continue our discussion of the end of 1984. I have described how the Lebanese affair came to a close. The rest of 1984 was devoted to a variety of issues. One of the key threads in that period was political. The Lebanese affair had turned out very badly, with Israel slowly but surely withdrawing its troops without having achieved any of its objectives. On the contrary, the Shiites in Lebanon were becoming increasingly antagonistic to the Israelis. They had been friendly towards Israel when the invasion began; thirty months later the Shiites that had taken over the PLO role of resistance. The problem of terrorism in southern Lebanon had not improved; in fact, it may have deteriorated. Israeli casualties were rising, day after day. If I remember correctly, by the time the war formally ended in August, 1982, there had been roughly two hundred

Israeli soldiers killed. In the following 2 # years, several hundreds more were killed, so the total casualties exceeded the war losses by a good deal. All these human losses, when added to the rapidly deteriorating economic conditions in Israel—inflation accompanied by stagnation—and to the fact that Shamir had failed to establish himself as a strong Prime Minister—paling in comparison with Begin and being undermined by Sharon—made it clear that a national election would have to be held, which was finally scheduled for June 23, 1984.

The late Spring, 1984 was devoted to electioneering. Elections always raise problems for American ambassadors in Israel. It is very difficult to escape the Israeli political cross-fires. He is always in the media's cross hairs in Israel; he speaks publicly frequently; he is the subject of press reporting and commentary; he just can't disappear during any period, particularly an election one. As a government, we of course had a preference in the election, which we did not express, even though it was deeply felt and most Israelis perceived it. In any case, we all had to be very careful during this election campaign to be seen as behaving in a completely impartial fashion between Peres and Shamir. I hoped that Labor would win because I thought that the Likud had failed miserably in its Lebanon policy and that it would not be very helpful in restarting the negotiations, as called for by Camp David and the Reagan Initiative. Nonetheless I was very cautious and impressed upon my staff the need to act accordingly.

In late May, Rumsfeld resigned as Middle East negotiator; he had reached the correct conclusion that the possibilities for further negotiations on Lebanon were not in the cards, at least for the foreseeable future. The broader peace process was at a complete standstill. Arafat had once again approached Hussein very gingerly; he had visited Jordan in the spring. He and Hussein had discussed how the two might join forces in the negotiations. Hussein had visited Washington, but no progress was in sight. We were not putting forth any new initiatives; we were standing firmly on the Reagan Initiative of 1982. The Israelis under Shamir were not prepared to discuss broad negotiations under that rubric or any other one. More importantly, the U.S. had finally come to understand

—belatedly—that until the Lebanon problem was under some reasonable control and until the Israelis were withdrawing, there would be no receptivity in Jerusalem for broader discussions of peace in the area. The Jordanians, who were the key to the restarting of negotiations, had perceived our weakness in Lebanon—our inability to counter Syria—which raised for them the need for great caution. The King knew full well that if he showed the slightest hint of interest in negotiations, Assad would crack down on him very hard. Since the U.S. could not counter that pressure, there was no chance that the King would take any interest in negotiations. So the peace process was at a dead end, both in Jerusalem and in Amman. The U.S. government's credit in the region was very low, although, paradoxically, our relationship with Israel was again reaching a high point, in light of the December, 1983 meetings, our joint efforts on strategic cooperation, and Reagan's clear and strong support of Israel in the UN.

Once it became clear that Syria was the “bad guy” on the block, Reagan was much more comfortable in showing his pro-Israeli sentiments and in supporting his ally in the Middle East. Certain nations would propose UN resolutions of condemnation of Israel for continuing settlements in the West Bank, or for the many alleged Israeli transgressions that the anti-Israeli bloc members would conjure up. Then Jeane Kirkpatrick, our Ambassador to the UN, and Reagan and Shultz in Washington would make it quite clear that we would veto any anti-Israel resolution. So the 1984 period was one of a rather close official US-Israel relationship, both in the political and the military spheres; the election merely slowed down the tempo of that cooperation. We spent much of the time before elections on routine business. I was certainly busy, but nothing of great significance occurred in this time frame. It gave my family and me and another family from Washington a chance to charter a yacht in June out of Cyprus and tour the Turkish coast and the Greek Islands for about two weeks.

As we approached the elections, the tensions mounted. The polls were showing that it would be closely contested. A number of Israel-Egypt issues arose just before the election, which took a certain amount of our time and effort. The Taba problem continued

unresolved and as long as that situation prevailed, the Egyptians were using it as an excuse for keeping the Israelis at a distance. Taba is a tiny piece of coast near Elat on which stands a hotel built by Israel, just across the Egyptian border. Its sovereignty was contested by Israel after the Peace Treaty. Ultimately, after years of frustrating U.S. mediation, the issue went to international arbitration and eventually the whole area was ceded to Egypt. The hotel became Egyptian-managed, but it still has a lot of Israeli clientele. In 1984-85, this was still unresolved and the chill in Israeli-Egyptian relations was an issue that continued to require a lot of our attention. We were continually trying to convince the Egyptians that progress on Taba could only come if they met with Israeli leaders; keeping them at a distance was counter-productive. We urged that Shamir be invited to visit Egypt, which Mubarak finally did. The last time that had happened was for Sadat's funeral in 1981. Shamir was viewed by the Egyptians as a “hard liner” with whom they could not deal. While boycotting Shamir, they did invite other Israelis, which just made Shamir even more rigid on the various issues at dispute with Egypt. Roy Atherton and I spent considerable time trying to push, cajole and prod the two parties in an effort to warm up the relationship which was crucial in the long run to Middle East peace. But in the Israeli pre-election period, it was a non-starter.

Arafat and Hussein met in early August, 1984, just after the election while Peres and Shamir were negotiating about forming the national unity government. After that meeting, Arafat announced that Hussein had agreed in principle to link his country to the future Palestinian state. It was another occasion when it appeared that Hussein and Arafat finally were singing from the same page. But as usual, that sense was quickly dissipated. The coalition deal between Peres and Shamir was struck about mid-August. (That is the arrangement I described earlier, in which each would take a two-year term as Prime Minister and Foreign Minister.) A Cabinet was hammered out, as well as a laborious coalition agreement. After Knesset approved, Peres was sworn in as Prime Minister on September 14, 1984. That was the beginning of the brief Peres era.

In the latter part of August, it was clear that the major issue confronting the new Israeli government was the economic crisis. The inflation in Israel was going through the roof. In fact, when Peres took office, the current monthly rate of inflation was equivalent to nearly 1200% annually. Hyperinflation was king. That forced Peres to give highest priority to economic stabilization. That required U.S. advice and emergency financial assistance to support the Israeli treasury. He and I agreed to discuss this issue even before he took office because I was leaving for Washington on consultations at the end of August. We met at the Tel Aviv Hilton around the swimming pool on a Saturday afternoon. We sat there in the sun in full view of all the photographers; it felt that the whole country was watching. We discussed the future of his government and what U.S. assistance he foresaw. There were a lot of pictures taken that day, all of which appeared in the newspapers, accompanied by all sorts of convoluted speculation about the themes of our discussion. It was reported that I was giving Peres his instructions on who he should appoint to his Cabinet as well as other similar nonsense. It was sort of fun. That session with Peres enabled me to return to Washington to brief Shultz in some detail about Peres' problems, opportunities and requirements before he was even sworn in as Prime Minister. While in Washington, I was able to get a pretty good sense of what the U.S. could or could not do for the new Israeli government.

As I said, I met Shultz on a couple of occasions during the first week of September. In one session, which was just between the two of us, I was able to discuss very frankly with him what had transpired during the previous year or two. He expressed considerable frustration with his inability to restart the peace negotiations. He told me that he had now concluded that the Reagan Initiative had been a mistake and that it would not result in the desired outcome even if it succeeded. He had given considerable thought to it and asked me to keep his view strictly to myself because the Initiative was still official U.S. policy. The Secretary had come to the conclusion that the most practical and desirable outcome would be an autonomous regime for the West Bank and Gaza within a shared sovereignty between Israel and Jordan. It was a modified Benelux formula. [In retrospect,

that may very likely be close to the final outcome. So Shultz in 1984 had come to the correct conclusion, although there is still quite a road to travel.]

One of the extraordinary matters that has been little noted is how the U.S. managed during the Peres period to extend a lot of conditioned assistance to Israel. Our aid came with a lot of tough economic conditions, but packaged so that there was no nationalist backlash, as had occurred in other countries when similar approaches were attempted. One of the principal reasons for this success was that Shultz was viewed as a strong Israeli supporter as well as being a wise and highly respected economist. His advice and that of Herb Stein and Stan Fisher, Shultz's unofficial expert advisor team, roughly paralleled what both Modai and Peres and their economic team knew had to be done. Of course, Peres and Modai faced formidable political barriers both in the Knesset and with other Ministers. The U.S. was insisting on some changes—privately, but persistently—and at the same time dangling the carrot of increased aid. That pressure along with the “safety net” that had been established, worked together to make the stabilization program a success. That was a story of highly skilled economic and political diplomacy between the two countries.

Peres still had the problem of Lebanon. Related to that was the question of whether Peres could persuade Hussein to join the peace process. One of the King's stated many reasons for evading Peres was that until Israel had evacuated Lebanon, he could not engage in any kind of dialogue. Peres and Hussein had of course met secretly a number of times over many years. Hussein had communicated with Peres and other Labor Party leaders frequently in secret before 1977 when Likud took over the Israeli government. There had even been a few—very few—contacts in the Likud period. The two principals knew each other and respected each other, but Hussein could not be enticed—prematurely from his point of view—into the peace process. He still had to contend with the Syrian menace and was not going to move until Israel had disentangled itself from Lebanon. He still had a major PLO problem, which he shared with the Israelis.

Yitzhak Rabin, as Defense Minister, was essentially in charge of Lebanon policy. I remember vividly my first meeting with him after becoming Minister. I had known him quite well since I used to play tennis with him every Saturday. I met him in his office in September privately just after the Cabinet was sworn in—and he came as usual right to the point. He asked me to arrange for a secret and serious probe in Damascus with Assad. He wanted to test whether Assad was at all ready to start peace negotiations. Rabin had always viewed Syria as the strategic key to achieving a broad peace agreement. Syria was also key to the solution of the Lebanon problem. I reported immediately to Shultz and we did in fact carry out some delicate probes, but I had to soon report to Rabin that we had not found any room for optimism. Assad was not interested in any negotiations—direct or indirect—with Israel at that time. Then Rabin began to examine his options for how to withdraw at minimal costs, without any deals with the Syrians. Laying his political and diplomatic groundwork took him about four months before he could demonstrate to the Likud Cabinet members, or at least a majority of them, there were no good alternatives to partial unilateral withdrawal. There was no possibility of negotiating with the Lebanese, based on the by-now moribund agreement. He also had to show that the cost to Israel of maintaining a forward political position in Lebanon was far too great. He had to win over enough Likud Cabinet colleagues because the character of the Cabinet of national unity required some bipartisan support of any initiative. Sharon, who was a member of the 10 member Inner Cabinet, was certain to be opposed to any sign of withdrawal. That meant that Rabin had to convince at least two of the other four Likud members to support him. He did that very skillfully by going through all the diplomatic motions of first trying to negotiate some agreement with the Lebanese government, while having us conduct the probe of Syrian intentions. He also tried to work out something with the Druze sect in Lebanon. He tried a variety of approaches, all unsuccessfully. In the meantime, Israeli casualties continued to mount as well as the domestic political pressures for some kind of resolution. By January, 1985, Rabin was able to report to the Cabinet he had always thought that would have to be the outcome: a withdrawal to the border area sparing Israel any further losses. His presentation convinced a couple of the Likud members—David

Levy and perhaps Moshe Arens—to support his plan. Shamir may also have supported Rabin, ultimately. In any case, Rabin played a very skillful political game to achieve what he had long perceived as necessary. He could not have reached that stage without having tried all other avenues first.

The withdrawal was begun on January 14, 1985. Rabin presented a three-stage plan for unilateral withdrawal. By the Spring of that year, the withdrawals were well along; it took about five months for the process to be completed with several thousand Israeli forces leap-frogging over each other while the Shiites sniped away at them. Of course, the broader Lebanon problem was still unresolved. The Israelis had succeeded in putting the issue aside as a domestic political matter because both parties, or at least majorities thereof, were in support of withdrawal. That took the issue out of the domestic political arena and helped keep it under control as a divisive factor in Israeli politics. The withdrawal was completed by early June just as my term in Israel came finally to an end, with only minor military units remaining in the area just north of the Lebanon-Israel border with General Lahad militia. The last Israeli troops came home three years after the start of the invasion in 1982. At the beginning, Begin and Sharon had promised a campaign of a week's duration with minimal casualties. In fact, during the three years, 650 Israeli soldiers died and over three thousand were wounded. It was a war with some of the highest Israeli casualty counts ever encountered. More than half of the deaths occurred after the war was over in the summer; they were victims of sniper fire, primarily from the Shiites and other Syrian surrogates.

By the Spring, 1985, Peres, Modai and Rabin had turned Israel's economic condition in the right direction, with considerable U.S. assistance, and had found a manageable solution to the Israeli presence in Lebanon, which was far short of Israel's original goals. The peace with Egypt remained very tenuous; it was working well, but it was hardly a warm relationship. No Egyptian tourists were coming to Israel; the culture agreements remained frozen. The dispute over Taba was the excuse for keeping a proper, but cold, relationship. Peres felt throughout the Fall that although his highest priority in the long run had to be

the peace process, that he was not in a political position, facing a divided Cabinet, to make any major moves until after economic stabilization had been successfully launched, after the Lebanon situation was under control and after the relationship with Egypt had improved. He understood that the key to the last goal was Taba, or at least it was until that issue could be politically neutralized and removed as a central point in the dialogue between Egypt and Israel. Then Peres thought he could undertake a major effort to restart the peace process. He discussed his priorities and views several times, at length privately with me and then with Shultz when he was in Washington. It was for that reason that Shultz determinedly rejected all suggestions that were repeatedly made from a number of sources—journalists, Middle East experts, the Israeli left and its American supporters—that a new Middle East negotiator be appointed. Such an appointment would probably have had to be accompanied by a new initiative to succeed the stalled Reagan Initiative, but Shultz understood that the situation was not yet ripe for such an approach. He and we couldn't tell our critics that we were following Peres strategy. Shultz was calibrating his approach to the peace process to be in synchronization with Peres' plans. Unfortunately, it took Peres too long to improve relations with Egypt.

That was an unhappy story. Peres tried very hard, starting in the Fall, 1984, to put together a package deal with Egypt which would have taken Taba off the agenda. Negotiations proceeded throughout 1985, long after my departure; finally, in January 1986, Peres actually had put a package together that he knew authoritatively would satisfy Mubarak that he tried to get his Cabinet to swallow. The crux of the plan was to invoke arbitration. The Cabinet met all night; Peres had won over enough Likud votes to achieve a majority—but then he became fatefully conciliatory and agreed to propose some Likud amendments for the package to Mubarak—who rejected them. The deal collapsed in mutual acrimony and it then took until August, 1986 for the two governments to agree to submit the Taba issue to arbitration. That was just one month before the end of Peres' Prime Ministership. So two years had passed during which the peace process was on hold pending approval to remove Taba from the Egyptian-Israeli relationships. In the meantime, Peres kept

talking to Hussein in private messages, trying to get the King involved in the peace process. But Hussein was not ready for a formal diplomatic initiative. By the time the circumstances were ripe, Peres was no longer Prime Minister but only Foreign Minister —and Prime Minister Shamir was very skeptical of Peres' initiatives. In the Spring, 1987, Peres, now Foreign Minister, met secretly with Hussein in London. Tom Pickering was by then our Ambassador in Israel and became a key player in this diplomatic process. Hussein and Peres reached an agreement on how to launch a new peace initiative that Peres brought back to Jerusalem very proudly. Shamir refused to accept it, in part because he was highly offended that Peres had carried out these negotiations in part behind his back, and had informed the Americans of the results before he had told his own Prime Minister! We were not very deft in our participation in this process since we were trying to help Peres and at the same time maintain honest relations with Shamir. The Peres agreement died. (Peres blamed Shultz for not coming down strong with him to persuade Shamir.) I believe to this day that had Peres been able to resolve the Taba issue within three months of taking office, as he should have been able to do, then a Jordan-Israel agreement could have been signed while he was still Prime Minister. That might have changed the course of history. The Taba issue took the whole two years of Peres' stewardship. In the final analysis, we had to send the Department's Legal Advisor, Abe Sofaer, to shuttle between Cairo and Jerusalem to put a deal together. It was a terrible diversion in the Peres era which hampered the Prime Minister and blocked his ability to really focus on negotiations with Jordan.

There were other diversions in 1984-1985. Cap Weinberger visited us in October, 1984. By this time, his views toward Israel had mellowed considerably now that the Lebanon war was over. He got along well with Peres and Rabin. His visit was much more pleasant than those he had made a couple of years earlier. During this period, I spent time on a lot of different issues. I was seeing Peres and Rabin very often. I was immersed in the economic issues which brought me into contact with Moday often. I was the conduit to this Israeli

government for Washington advice on the stabilization program. At the same time, I was moving into a phase-out psychology. Everyone knew I was leaving in June.

In February, we started participating in the long farewell process that didn't end until June. Every organization in Israel wanted to have a formal function to say goodbye to Sallie and me. We were fodder for five months for the gossip columnists. We attended parties, dedications, including the naming of a forest near Jerusalem for us. Peres was extraordinarily gracious throughout the period. He made a point of personally participating in many events; he spoke at the dedication of the forest. The naming of forests was a custom in Israel for large donors, which we were not, but many of our Israeli friends had paid for planting a lot of trees in the Jerusalem national forest. The small Lewis arboretum is in the same general area as the Hubert Humphrey Parkway, a project I helped dedicate sometime earlier, together with Muriel Humphrey and their three sons. The Lewis Forest was a lovely gesture which we greatly appreciated. There were many other very nice gestures, but the “farewell season” stretched out much too long. It was an exhausting few months. The combination of social and organizational events together with the discharge of my regular duties, including an increasing media workload which included farewell interviews with all the major journalists was almost too much for us. We were pretty well played out by May 1985.

Then came the inevitable denouement—a final, bitter clash with Ariel Sharon as a farewell present!! I will finish this overly long history of my tenure as Ambassador to Israel with a special section. On some of the “lowlights” of the Sharon-Lewis relationship—ending with the final episode which occurred just as I was saying farewell to Israel.

Interview No. 13Subject: Sharon-Lewis Confrontations

(The “Bulldozer” and the “Higher Commissioner”)

I would now like to start with a series of events that look place in December 1983, which became major cause celebre in Israel, although they were almost overlooked by the

U.S. press and by my colleagues in Washington. I have previously referred to my private meeting that took place at the end of 1982 with Simcha Erlich, then Vice Premier and Minister of Finance in Begin's Cabinet and leader of the Liberal Party. He was a strong supporter of the United States and a good personal friend. That meeting figured a year later in my bitter encounter with Sharon.

I had left Israel for what turned out to be an unanticipated two months' absence. I left on November 19, 1983 to return to Washington to participate first in a visit to the U.S. by President Herzog, and then in important meetings with Prime Minister Shamir—Begin's successor—and Defense Minister Arens—Sharon's successor after the publication of the Kahan Commission review of the Sabra-Shatila affair. Both were in Washington together, in part as result of a warming trend in the U.S. relationship that had been underway for a few months. After attending both sets of meetings, I was planning to take home leave. As it turned out, I didn't return to Israel until January 26, 1984. I had not been in the United States very long when this affair exploded in Israel; I had to deal with it at long distance, which is probably why I didn't react to it as quickly as I should have. Had I been in Israel, the whole business might have been put to rest sooner.

On December 4, I went to a Redskin football game. I am an avid Redskin fan and the Redskins were Super Bowl-bound that season. It was at that moment a dramatic news story was developing in Israel. I learned subsequently that on that morning's TV news show in Israel, the correspondent, Shimon Schiffer, who was then and still is a very important political commentator, reported a very garbled version of the meeting I had with Erlich a year earlier. To this day, I don't know the full story, although I discussed it later with Schiffer, who swears that he was provided the information in a credible fashion, but it was clear to me that he was given a very garbled story. It was alleged that there was documentary evidence to support the story; it has never been produced and I am sure it does not exist because what Sharon and his henchmen put out was quite different from the facts. Schiffer reported that there was a “protocol” (the Israeli term for transcript) of a conversation, the details of which had come to his attention; those details were allegedly

supported by a witness to the conversation. This conversation was supposed to have taken place shortly before the Kahan Commission had completed its report. The “protocol” allegedly had me saying to Erlich, in reference to Sharon, that “that man must go. You must understand that Begin is not going to be invited to the United States, as he wished to be, because of him. Furthermore, US-Israeli relationships had suffered because of him”. Erlich allegedly replied: “Sam, we are aware of the problem. I promise he will leave the government. The Kahan Commission will pass its verdict. The Prime Minister (Begin) is already aware of the mistake he made when he made him Defense Minister. After the Commission's report is published, Begin will assure that he is put aside in a position of no importance”. Schiffer's report claimed that there were three people present at the meeting: Erlich, myself and Naftali Yaniv, who was the spokesman for the Agriculture Ministry. (I think that Erlich was at that time temporarily in charge of Agriculture because of some changes in the Cabinet.) He was said to have been there as a translator, had taken notes and made the transcript. Schiffer also said that the conversation was recorded on tape cassette. He went on to say that after Erlich's death—he had died in mid-1983—his secretary had passed this document together with other documents and the cassette to Erlich's widow, Zila. Just before his report was to be televised, Schiffer had called our Embassy press spokesman and asked for a comment. The spokesman, certainly under the DCM's guidance, said that I had met with Erlich from time to time, sometimes at the Minister's request, but that he couldn't confirm any of the details of any conversation.

As I said, I was completely unaware of this series of events. But the TV report started a major uproar which reverberated for weeks thereafter. It led to a sharp confrontation between Sharon and me. Sharon urged that I be declared persona non grata. I have a file about an inch and a half thick of press and public comments which were made over the following three weeks in Israel. The initial press stories, in the Jerusalem Post and other papers, accepted the fact that a meeting had taken place. Schiffer was viewed as a credible correspondent and the press therefore assumed the veracity of the story. This view was reinforced by the fact that the Embassy's spokesman had not denied the

essence of the story; he refused to comment. That position was viewed as tantamount to confirmation. It is an attitude that prevailed in Israel; I had long ago learned that unless you immediately jump on a distorted version of a story, it was assumed to be correct and will be accepted as fact in all sorts of subsequent discussions. Had I been there, I would have immediately issued a flat and vigorous denial. But I wasn't and in fact, the Embassy did not contact me immediately, which was another mistake.

The next morning in Washington, I attended a briefing for Israeli correspondents on the Shamir-Arens talks and on other aspects of the US-Israeli relations. During this briefing, one of the Israeli correspondents asked me about the Schiffer report; that was the first I had heard about it. As you can well imagine, I was upset, to put it mildly. I didn't have the text of the Schiffer report, so I couldn't really respond in any depth. I did dismiss the accuracy of the report, as described to me by the Israeli correspondent. After the briefing, I called the DCM—Robert Flaten—and was briefed. He told me what the Embassy had said. Flaten's view, supported by the Embassy's press spokesman, was not to take the Schiffer report too seriously; their advice was not to dignify it further by any comment from me. They expected the story to blow over quickly. That unfortunately was not good advice; I knew it was not good advice, but for some reason I accepted it. So we took no immediate action to set the record straight. The problem was that there were elements of the story which were true. For example, there had been a meeting; it had been about the sorry state of US-Israel relations; Sharon's name had been mentioned by Erlich. So I could not flatly deny the whole story; we would have had to confirm part of the story. That was undoubtedly one of the reasons why the Embassy thought it wiser not to deal with the story at the time; if it were to grow, then it would have to be dealt with.

Over the succeeding days, the story spun out of control. I was in Washington trying to prepare myself for a major address that I was to give on Tuesday January 7 in Baltimore. I was to be honored by the presentation of the Louis Brandeis award from the Zionist Organization of America. It was that organization's annual convention. I was going to talk about the peace process and US-Israel relations. I had not yet written it and so I was

very preoccupied with this task. That also diverted my attention from the uproar in Israel, which I should have paid more attention to. In the meantime, back in Israel, all the major press were running the story. Interestingly enough, the most accurate report appeared in Ha'olam Ha'ze, a part of the popular press which did not have much credibility, but which often carried some very interesting political stories. The editor was a veteran left-wing politician, Uri Avenery. Ha'olam Ha'ze talked to Schiffer and to Yaniv, the Agriculture Ministry spokesman who attended the meeting. So that paper printed a fairly accurate story, which indicated that no transcript existed. It stated that whenever I met with Erlich, whose English was rudimentary—that is he could understand quite well if you spoke slowly, but could not express himself very well—he preferred to speak in Hebrew. So we needed an interpreter to translate his comments into English and to assist with my comments if Erlich was unsure about my meaning. Yaniv was a young civil servant in the Agriculture Ministry, whose head had earlier been Sharon. He was very loyal to Erlich and a fine person. Yaniv apparently reported the meeting as it had taken place; he apparently said that my meeting with Erlich was not unique. Whenever he translated, Yaniv said that he took notes of Erlich's comments because they needed to be translated. He also said that he may have written down a few of my comments, but that he did not attend the meeting to draft a transcript subsequently; that was not part of his assignment. After my meeting with Erlich, Yaniv was in a hurry to leave; he had with him some sheets of paper with the notes he had taken at the meeting and as he left, he dropped those notes on Erlich's secretary's desk. He could have thrown them out, but he left them behind. She took the notes and stuck them in a safe, where they stayed until after Erlich's death. After his death, the secretary, for reasons yet unknown, pulled out the documents in the safe and sent them to Mrs. Erlich. She was interviewed a week after the Schiffer report by a journalist and denied that there had been any transcript. Mrs. Erlich was somewhat more sympathetic to Sharon than her husband had been. But in any case, she did not support the Schiffer story which, as I said, alleged that there was a “protocol” of my meeting with Erlich. It is interesting to note that neither Schiffer nor any of the major press talked to her before the report was issued or immediately thereafter. There was a lot of speculation on

whether there had ever been a meeting although I had never denied that such a meeting had taken place. There were more questions raised about the existence of the transcript; I am convinced that there never was such a document. There could not have been given the way the meeting proceeded.

Sharon immediately picked up on the Schiffer report. Schiffer and Sharon had been close friends for many years in the past, although they had a falling out over the Lebanon invasion. Since that event, they had not been close. Schiffer had opposed the Lebanon war and became disenchanted with Sharon. Before that, he had been one of Sharon's favorite channels for leaks which supported Sharon's views. Despite their falling out, many Israelis and I suspected that the story had been manufactured by Sharon and Schiffer as a way of getting Sharon back into the headlines. I mentioned earlier the damning findings of the Kahan Commission. That Commission had demanded that Sharon resign as Defense Minister, which he did and then was given the job of Minister without Portfolio—he had no job. Sharon remained in the Begin Cabinet as a pariah. He was bitter at the way he had been treated and very unhappy with having been shuffled off to the side. He wanted to get back into the arena. As the US-Syrian confrontation in Lebanon began in the Fall of 1983, Sharon was saying that the U.S. was finally beginning to understand what he had tried to do in June, 1982. That was only one method of many that Sharon was using to try to get back into political power. He disdained Shamir and never took him seriously; he never accepted Shamir as Begin's successor. Shamir detested Sharon, but he was very careful how he dealt with him. In fact, Shamir just ignored Sharon. That made it hard for Sharon to find a way back, particularly since his reputation was still in low repute as result of the Kahan Commission report. Many journalists, other Israelis and I began to suspect that the whole Schiffer report and subsequent uproar may have been manufactured by Sharon, although none of us could ever find any evidence of such a plot and of course Sharon denied the allegation vigorously.

While the uproar in Israel continued, the Embassy kept its silence. Each day I would call from Washington and I would always receive the advice to not respond to allegations on

the assumption that the flurry would die down soon. But I was increasingly concerned about the advice. On Wednesday, December 9, Sharon was interviewed by a TV correspondent; it was a medium that was tailor made for his demagogue style. During this session, Sharon gave out the text of the letter he had sent to Shamir two days earlier. In that letter, he demanded that Shamir initiate a full investigation of the charges that the American Ambassador had tried to influence domestic Israeli matters by trying to have an Israeli Minister fired. He said that that was unacceptable behavior and demanded a full inquiry. Shamir had ignored previous Sharon demands for that investigation; that led Sharon to write the letter and distribute it to the press.

The letter, addressed to Shamir, read:

“In its news broadcast last Sunday, December 4, Kol Israel broadcast a detailed report according to which the US Ambassador to Israel, Mr. Samuel Lewis, was active in a meeting with Deputy Prime Minister, the late Simcha Erlich, to have me removed from my post as Defense Minister as a condition for improving relations between the US and Israel. According to the newscast, minutes of the conversation, held before the publication of the findings of the Commission of Inquiry (the Kahan Commission) are in possession of Mr. Erlich's widow and that the notes were taken down by a civil servant who was present at the meeting. I do not doubt the authenticity of the report which again proves the intolerable and uninterrupted intervention by a number of ranking American officials in Israel's internal affairs. Although this may be a case of foreign subversion against me, I feel that there is a vital question of principal concern to the government. It is inconceivable that a foreign Ambassador, even one of the most powerful and most friendly towards Israel, should engage in replacement of Ministers in the government of Israel and consequently in their nomination, just as it would be inconceivable that the Israeli Ambassador in Washington should seek to have figures replaced in the American administration. (I might parenthetically note that Sharon, throughout the Fall, was leading a public campaign along with a number of other Israelis to having Cap Weinberger fired because of his alleged anti-Israeli attitude.) I am absolutely convinced, Mr. Prime Minister,

that you, who in the 40s, put up a valiant fight for the independence of Israel as the head of the bold Lehi organization against the mighty British Empire, are particularly incensed by gross foreign intervention in our internal affairs."

The rest of the letter was a diatribe which eventually led to Sharon's further discredit. He went on to say:

"I am furthermore aware of your long standing sensitivity to the subject of Jewish collaborators with foreign bodies and the handing over of Jews by Jews to win favors with foreigners. You will therefore probably understand and respond to my demand as follows: a) investigate the grave and subversive intervention by Ambassador Lewis in the internal affairs of Israel by an appropriate Commission of Inquiry; b) to submit forthwith to the state's legal authorities the minutes of the meeting between Mr. Lewis and Mr. Erlich and the minutes of every other conversation between them so that these notes can be submitted to a body which will investigate the intolerable activities of the American Ambassador, seek (?) and hear full evidence from the civil servant who assisted in the talk or talks. Indeed to bring the entire material as well as all of the direct and indirect material in the hands of Israeli authorities on the subject of American intervention in our internal affairs before the Commission of Inquiry. The inquiry I demand should be conducted in the widest possible scale. It is essential not in order to expose the direct responsibility of a number of American figures and circles to the grave mistakes committed in Lebanon, but in order to promptly take up a matter which concerns our independence and to put a timely stop to the serious process of intolerable intervention by some American circles in Israel's internal affairs, particularly at this moment when it is necessary to establish genuine foundations for strategic cooperation between Israel and its great friend, the United States. In the words of former Prime Minister Menachem Begin to that same Ambassador Lewis. 'Israel will not allow anyone to treat it as a banana republic and a vassal state'. Mr. Prime Minister, I have outlined to you the seriousness of the Lewis-Erlich affair in a telephone

conversation that very Sunday this week when it was broadcast on Kol Israel asking you to take action. I await your early reply to my request."

Sharon was a shrewd person who could write, although he may have had some assistance in this letter from members of his staff. As I mentioned he held a TV interview on December 9, during which he elaborated on the themes in the letter with considerable additional embellishment. He said that the instance he cited was not an isolated one; there had been many other such occasions "just when we were tightening US-Israel relations. We have to define what is acceptable and what isn't. I claim that there were many other actions by several US officials with Israeli collaborators to dismiss me from the post, within the framework of a deal which can be more or less stated as follows: You'll dismiss Sharon as a condition for improving US-Israeli ties. I didn't speak about this, but I was well aware of it. But I was taken aback by the report of the secret meeting between Lewis and Erlich. I am talking about the issue of subversion by several Americans and I have asked for a Commission of Inquiry". Then he talked about the illegality of such foreign activities. Then he went on to say: "Let me reminisce a little bit. Can you imagine the Soviet Ambassador in Israel thirty years ago trying to change the Israeli Foreign Minister as a condition for improving relations between the two countries? I am convinced that Ben Gurion would have demanded that he be declared persona non grata and would have ordered an investigation of the Israelis that might have collaborated with him. It should be borne in mind that for less than that, far less than what Erlich did, Aharan Cohen (a MAPAM leader who was accused of holding contacts with a foreign agent—a Soviet scientific institute representative in Israel in the late 1950s) was tried. No foreign Ambassador or government should be allowed to fire an Israeli Minister".

Sharon went on in that vein. He was pressed very hard about any proof that might be available to support his charges. He never offered any saying that he did not have any documents. He said that Erlich may not have liked him, but he thought that carrying his bias so far as to conspire with foreign elements to force his withdrawal from the Cabinet was beyond the pale. Then Sharon began to stress that a Commission of Inquiry

was required to look into all of these charges; he was confident that it would find the corroborative evidence. Finally, he was asked straight out whether he had any evidence himself. He said that he would not divulge that information despite the fact that the TV interviewer was “his friend”. He felt that the task of finding evidence was up to the Commission. In addition, he argued that since Erlich had promised me that Sharon would be discharged that this was evidence of conspiracy between the American and Israeli governments. He went as far as charging that the Kahan Commission was really part of that plot and that Erlich knew what the outcome would be, which enabled him to assure me that Sharon would be removed from his post once the Commission report was issued. That outlandish accusation also back-fired on Sharon eventually because the well established objectivity and thoroughness of the Kahan Commission was viewed as making the allegation totally ridiculous. When Sharon used the phrase “Israeli collaborators” and his reference to the 1950s spy case as a proper analogy with Erlich, who had been highly respected while alive and now dead and therefore unable to defend himself, that further added to diminish the credibility of Sharon's charges.

But at least for the time being his TV interview was very powerful. He speculated that the plot against him had been engendered by the Americans who wanted to get rid of him because they knew that he was opposing their nefarious policies in Lebanon. He, Sharon, was standing up for Israeli interests and that as long as he could wield some influence, he was blocking the U.S. from forcing a Lebanese deal with Israel which would have been very adverse to Israeli interests. He tried to paint himself as the guardian of Israeli interest against American misguided policies. I think that Sharon by this time was a very bitter, frustrated, wildly ambitious, undoubtedly patriotic—at least in his eyes—man who felt that he had almost reached the pinnacle of power, but had been unceremoniously blocked from reaching his ambition and had in fact been discharged from the Defense Ministry—as a result of the Lebanon crisis for which he had never been willing to accept responsibility. He manipulated the Defense Ministry and the media as best he could in order to blame

others for the failures in Lebanon until the Kahan Commission came along and put an end to that effort to revise history.

After the issuance of the Kahan Commission report, as I said, Sharon was removed from the Defense Ministry and in effect marginalized. His personal situation was aggravated by Shamir's assumption of the Prime Ministership because he thought so little of Shamir. That made Sharon very frustrated and angry at everybody. He always insisted that he was a great friend of the United States. In the TV interview that I mentioned and subsequently, Sharon developed a new line which in essence maintained the whole Lebanese problem was due to the fact that President Reagan had been misled and poorly advised by a cabal in the State Department. That cabal consisted of Phil Habib, Cap Weinberger, Sam Lewis, Nick Veliotes, Morris Draper and a couple of others. He maintained that he bore no ill against the U.S. government or President Reagan, but he did resent the poor advice that the cabal had developed which had led the President into great error in Lebanon and who had persuaded him that Sharon was a bad guy. (I might say that only Weinberger might have qualified to make that list.) The general conclusion on Sharon is that he was a brilliant field commander—tremendous initiative, creativity—although there would be some that would deny him even that. There were two officers who served under Sharon in the Sinai campaign, Motta Gur and Motke Zipori—who later had to work with Sharon on political issues—who believed that he had recklessly lost the lives of a number of his soldiers by insisting on a very quick quixotic operation which was not sound strategy. There were also critics of Sharon's earlier handling of Commando Unit 101 which he led in raids into Jordan leading to some political complications because of the number of civilians who were killed in the attacks. Nevertheless, Sharon's credentials as a field commander have been very high. More argument can be had about whether he was a wise military strategist. On that issue, there is far less agreement. Some of the same dichotomy appears in Sharon's political life. He was a very able tactician, but as a strategist, he was frequently found wanting.

By December 9, I had become very concerned with developments in Israel. By this time, I was sure that the furor would not die down and that Sharon would surely make a campaign of it. I now felt that some counter measures had to be taken, even though it was clear that Shamir was not reacting at all in the hope that the matter would blow over soon. That raised in my mind the concern that if I were to issue a statement, that might undermine Shamir's Fabian tactics. So I asked Bob Flaten—I believe on December 10—after having heard about Sharon's TV interview, to talk to Hanan Bar-on who was our closest contact point in the Foreign Ministry and a good personal friend. He was a very able professional who at the time was the Deputy Director of the Foreign Ministry. I wanted Bar-on, who was responsible for US-Israeli relationships, to talk to Shamir to explain to the Prime Minister what my views were. I wanted Shamir, through Bar-on, to know that nothing improper had taken place during my meeting with Erlich and that I was prepared to say so publicly. But I wanted to be guided by the Prime Minister's advice on what, if anything, I should say for the public record, I wanted Shamir to know that I was refraining from making any public statement until I had heard his advice. The first response came to me on December 11, via Bar-on and Flaten; it was essentially advice to do nothing. I was told that the Prime Minister didn't take it seriously and that he was not concerned about it and would prefer that I not make any public statement.

Twenty hours later, I received another call from Flaten. He just had heard from Bar-on. This time, I was told that the situation was heating up to the point where a clear public denial from me might be in order. By this time, eight days had already passed from the initial Schiffer report. On the next day, December 13, we issued in Tel Aviv the following statement:

“The Embassy has received a number of questions concerning a recent story about a meeting of a year ago between Deputy Prime Minister Erlich and Ambassador Lewis. We have consulted with Ambassador Lewis, who is presently on home leave in the United States, and are authorized to categorically deny that Ambassador Lewis at any time either

recommended or advised Deputy Prime Minister Erlich or any other Israeli Minister or official that the then Minister of Defense should be relieved of his responsibilities.

That flat denial turned out to be quite useful, but it had come too late to stop the various stories, which continued to spin out of control. Some were, by this time, becoming favorable to me. Dan Margolit, in Haaetz, on December 9—the same day of Sharon's interview—wrote a wonderful column “in praise of the High Commissioner”—a nickname that had been earlier given to me. Margolit made a strong argument against taking any of Sharon's allegations seriously and furthermore said some nice things about my efforts. He, like many other journalists, included some negative comments about Israelis, who, while eager to talk to me and to come to my receptions and dinners, had not risen to my defense. He said: “The special position occupied by Lewis in high Israeli circles for a long time has been an established fact. At a Hanukah party six years ago (that was about six months after I had arrived) I saw Ministers, officers in uniforms and senior officials standing in line to talk for a few minutes privately with the Ambassador. Ministers told him what they did not dare leak to us journalists. Frustrated opposition members wanted to seek his assistance to weaken the Likud government, as it emerged recently from a statement made in a well attended meeting with him by members of the business community only a few months ago” (that was another event, but had some relevance to the Sharon attack). The article went on to ask how I had managed to become so well acquainted with Israeli affairs. He maintained that in a democratic society that was perfectly acceptable and that in fact there was no way that an Israeli citizen could be barred from talking to the American Ambassador or other diplomats.

One of the lead articles went on to say that there “was nothing wrong with this. No free democratic society wants or can restrict the freedom of speech of its citizens conversing with the American ambassador or other diplomats. The problem is to know where the limits are. Lewis is not the address for obtaining the answer to these questions. The limits have to be set by every Israeli. When this limit is exceeded by Erlichs, it is not excessive candor, but the underlying symptom that arouses concern. In the inept government of Menachem

Begin, all values and norms for self-restraint were destroyed and eroded. Lewis didn't appoint himself High Commissioner of Israeli society. It was the society that bestowed on him this title at its own initiative".

That was an illustration of one approach to the issue. Some journalists essentially followed that line. But there were others who were writing, on a continuous basis, less favorable articles, some of which were on the nasty side. They still pretended to accept the basic argument that something improper had happened. On December 10, I had a telephone call from a journalist—Mira Avrech—a close friend, from Israel. She holds a unique place in Israeli journalism. She is essentially a gossip columnist; but she writes the most widely read column in Israel in the biggest paper Yidiot, and she is also very politically oriented. She is a very close friend of Shimon Peres and many other Israeli leaders in all factions, although perhaps her contacts are strongest with the Labor Party. At one point, she was a member of Irgun and therefore has long standing connections with people like Begin. In any case, she was a good friend; I had from time to time given her interviews. She was becoming concerned about the development of the Lewis-Sharon affair. She knew I was in Washington and away from the scene and she was very sensitive to press moods. When she called, she told me that she had agreed to appear on a major TV panel talk show that Dan Raviv was hosting. This was, at the time, probably the TV show with the second highest viewer audience in Israel. She was going to appear together with the almost legendary former chief of the Mossad, Isser Harel. The subject of the panel show was going to be the "Lewis-Sharon affair". Mira said that it would be helpful if I could give her a statement that she could use publicly; she thought that would reinforce what the Embassy had already said. And that is what I did; I gave her a further statement. She handled herself extremely well on the panel. She said, in response to a question from Raviv concerning Sharon's accusation of subversions and interference:"First, Lewis denies it. I talked to him today on the telephone when I knew I was going to be on your show. He emphatically denies that he demanded Sharon's ouster. In addition there is no proof that anything like that was ever said. I also called Mrs. Erlich. She told me that there are

no minutes—'I received no minutes'. She also said that Yaniv had told her that no such minutes exist. Mrs. Erlich added: 'Sam Lewis can certainly sue someone for libel'".

Raviv then said: "But Schiffer insists that his report is correct". To which Mira replied:

"I have many reasons to believe that he was misled. First, I believe Lewis. He never misled me. Moreover, no secrets were likely to be discussed in the presence of Yaniv. Lewis is no political appointee. He knows the ropes. They have been keeping him in Tel Aviv for six years because they are afraid that if they send him to another post, he will quit. They don't want him to go. Everything said in that meeting was not really taken down".

Harel then said: "It doesn't even look serious to me for the reasons Mira mentioned. Even if those things were said, they were said by two people on a very personal basis, informally. The whole thing is trivial." Mira then said: "As an ambassador, you have to speak up if you feel that bilateral relationships would suffer if you don't." So her participation in this panel show was very effective and helpful. I never publicly commented on the affair again and neither did the Embassy. My denial, made through Mira, was carried widely by the press. The editorials, like the one that appeared in the Jerusalem Post the following day just blasted Sharon. The Jerusalem Post's editorial was entitled "Traitors All". It said: "The Cabinet yesterday did not discuss Ariel Sharon's demand for the appointment of a judicial committee...It is preposterous. Mr. Lewis can not be interviewed by any Israeli judicial panel and Mr. Erlich is dead." It went from there to totally destroy all of Sharon's arguments.

The Jerusalem Post at the time was anti-Likud and liberal. Mira Avrech followed up her TV appearance with an article in Yidiot on December 13, in which she covered the same ground. She also reminded her readers that Yitzhak Rabin, when he was Israeli Ambassador in Washington, had openly backed Richard Nixon's reelection, much to the dismay of traditional diplomats. She also mentioned that Ezar Weizmann had jumped on Jimmy Carter's campaign plane, right after having left the post of Defense Minister, and

had appeared with him in public. She also reminded people that this meeting with Erlich had taken place just a couple of days after Sharon had tried to humiliate Phil Habib by flaunting his secret agreement with Lebanon in a formal meeting with the Prime Minister. He was obviously intent on angering the U.S., raising the already cold temperature in Washington to near freeze levels. Her adding a commentary about the atmosphere that prevailed when I met with Erlich was a good idea. Avrech was also helpful in describing my conversation with her. She added to what had been said on TV by saying that I had categorically denied ever saying to Erlich that Sharon should be ousted. I told her and she quoted me correctly as saying that: “We discussed the deteriorating situation between Israel and the U.S. and the possibilities of restoring it. Never at any moment or under any circumstances did I recommend or advise Erlich on dismissal of Sharon from his job.” She then asked: “What about the Kahan Commission? Did Erlich say two weeks after the publication of the report that Sharon would be ousted?” I answered: “We never even mentioned the Commission”. Then I added: “So simple a document could not exist because such things were never said. But if someone does allegedly have such a document quoting me as saying things of this kind, the document is clearly forged.” Avrech, in her article, went on to say: “There is no recording and as for notes, Simcha Erlich's widow denies ever receiving any. If they exist, there is no proof of their authenticity”. So Mira was an important player in this saga.

Marriv on December 16 carried a very thoughtful, accurate article about my relationship with Sharon and Begin and my role in Israel. He reminded the readers that Sharon himself, before the Lebanon war and a year before my meeting with Erlich, had “leaked” the outlines of all of his plans for the Lebanon invasion to me, to Phil Habib and to other Americans. So when Sharon talked about “collaboration”, he was vulnerable to the charge himself. The article also mentioned that Sharon had been a frequent visitor to the Lewis' residence and had tried very hard to co-opt me to his point of view on settlements during an earlier period of my Israeli tour.

By December 23, after three weeks, the brouhaha was beginning to wind down. There was still enough interest in it to generate a Knesset debate(!) about Sharon and me; it lasted for about an hour. There had been two private member bills submitted on December 21: one from Moshe Shahal of the Labor Party urging the government to establish the Commission of Inquiry demanded by Sharon, because he wanted a full investigation of all information that Sharon had shared with us about the Lebanon invasion and of other matters, thereby trying to turn the tables on Sharon by having a Commission which would look into other Sharon activities not covered by the Kahan Commission. The other private member bill was submitted by Ronnie Milo, a Likud member, now the Mayor of Tel Aviv and a sidekick of Shamir. (One could say that Milo was a stalking horse for Shamir.) His bill would have turned the tables in a different way. It would have investigated the contacts between foreign representatives and the opposition parties—basically Labor. The Knesset debate was tepid; there were only about twenty members (out of 120) on the floor. Sharon did not show up for the debate. By this time, he was clearly in retreat. Yehuda Ben-Meir, then the Deputy Foreign Minister (also a good friend of mine), articulated the government's positions on the motions. He essentially said that the whole affair was a tempest in a tea cup. He read the Embassy's denial and gave a lot of kudos to Erlich, describing him as a true patriot; he was “shocked” that anybody would challenge his integrity. All of Sharon's allegations about “traitors” and “collaborationists” had really back-fired. Sharon had managed by this time to make Erlich a saint, which was perhaps something more than he deserved. Nevertheless, since he was dead, his character did not deserve to be assassinated. The debate, according to the Embassy's report, aroused very little emotion. Shahal's motion was defeated by a tie vote; Milo's motion was withdrawn at the suggestion of Ben-Meir. The Embassy, in its cabled report, stated:

“Most observers were saying afterwards that the episode as ended has been a defeat for Sharon, who didn't even attend the session. The outcome is another example of the recent decline of Sharon's political fortune. He has placed himself clearly outside the Likud leadership and is openly criticized by many of his Cabinet colleagues. While he is still

regarded by many, both inside and outside of Herut as responsible for Israel's problem in Lebanon and Begin's political downfall, the former Defense Minister is a stubborn persistent political figure whose outspoken criticism deeply disturbs Shamir. Our contacts are quick to warn that it would be premature and unwise to write Sharon off politically."

That was of course true because Sharon is still around even after many years of being a real problem.

When I returned to Israel a few weeks later, I said to Shamir privately at one point: 'I hope that my conversation with Erlich didn't cause you too much angst." He replied that I shouldn't worry about it. There was nothing to be concerned about.

Around December 23, a cartoon appeared in Harretz; it had been drawn by the leading cartoonist in Israel, Zeev. It is a fascinating cartoon, a copy of which I still possess and which is hanging on our walls. It's entitled "At the Piano: Sam Lewis with the Zadikov Choir" (a well known choir). It shows me sitting at a piano, dressed in tails with an open shirt-which is what I always wore in Israel—playing a tune entitled "US-Israeli Relations". The music is very sweet; the bars are floating up from the piano to a window through which you can see a White House-like building in the distance. There in front of the building are Reagan and Shultz listening happily to the sound of my music. There is a choir of people who are singing with me. The choir consists of all of Israel's political leaders—Begin, Shamir, Meir Amit, Ben Elizar, Weizmann, etc. The choir is using documents—Cabinet decisions, protocols, reports—all secret documents—as their music sheets. The choir is singing its secrets to the United States to the accompaniment of my piano. Down in the right hand corner, there is an open safe—Erlich's safe. Sharon is shown as a lumbering elephant—as he was often in Israeli cartoons—coming out of the safe, carrying a sign in his trunk, lettered "Commission of Inquiry". As this elephant comes out of the safe, he is kicking over and breaking a lot of crockery filled with flowers. The vases are labeled "The Commission of Inquiry on the Sabra-Shatila Massacre", "the agreement Habib made with Lebanon", "the Israeli reactor on the Golan law". These are

filed in a waste paper basket next to the piano. The cartoon was an extraordinary effort to depict the High Commissioner as the conductor of the Israeli choir. It sort of sums up the way the Israeli press liked to depict my role in their country after six and a half years as ambassador.

Unfortunately, this episode did not end my problems with Sharon. Up to this time, my relations with Sharon had been very correct. When we first arrived in Israel in 1977, Sharon was the Minister of Agriculture and responsible for settlement policy. He tried his best then to convince me and through me, the U.S. government, that Israeli settlements in the occupied territories were beneficial. He tried very hard to cultivate me. We entertained the Sharons very often. We had private dinners with him. They invited us to their ranch. They came to some of our larger affairs. I went to his office; I took groups of American visitors to his office. He showed me around some of the West Bank settlements. Eventually it became clear to him that I was not buying his argument, but we maintained a sort of jocular stand-offishness. He would make cracks about our policy and I would return with comments in similar vein. All the exchanges were quite acceptable. From the period before the Lebanon war, through that war and afterwards, Sharon was Defense Minister. He became increasingly difficult and eventually impossible about the U.S. role in the area. He was very rude to Habib, Draper and sometimes to me, although I would be rude right back, as did Habib. We didn't let him get away unchallenged when he made nasty cracks. Maury Draper tended to be more passive which just encouraged Sharon to be even more outrageous. He behaved as all bullies do. After the Kahan Commission, he was fired as Defense Minister. He was convinced then that his demise was the result of a U.S. conspiracy with the Israeli government. It was of course true that the U.S. government, from the top down, was very hostile toward him and publicly so. He continued to dig, in the Israeli press, at American presidents, Weinberger and others. Washington had become very cold about Sharon, which was a complete turn around from the beginning of the Reagan administration; then it was very positive about him. It didn't take the administration

long to turn around. Shultz was very bitter and angry with Sharon, during the Lebanon war and afterwards. Sharon became pretty much persona non grata in Washington.

I continued to have proper relations; when we had business to transact with him, we conducted it, politely. Of course, by 1983, he didn't have a Ministry, so that we didn't have much business to discuss. The American Jewish leaders who wanted to talk to Sharon—and there were always some even when he was in disgrace—would see him without any Embassy escort and we would not be involved. But up to the end of 1983, I tried to be perfectly professional with Sharon. If I saw him at a function, I would greet him properly; his response was usually quite cold. But we were speaking to each other. After the December 1983 episode, which was clearly an effort to have me removed from my post while I was out of Israel, I was furious. So I made a resolution that I would continue an official relationship with Sharon if my duties required it, but I would not have anything to do with him socially. I did not feel that I had any obligation to do so. So from January 1984 to when we left in June 1985, we never invited the Sharons to the residence. We did not even invite him to the July 4th, 1984 reception, although all the other Cabinet members were. I was very amused by the fact that within a few days thereafter, Sharon was circulating stories around town about what an insult it bad been to Israel that he should not have been invited to our American Embassy for the July 4th festivities. He loved to talk about the “boycott” that had been imposed on him by Ambassador Lewis and the U.S. government; he kept this line going for the rest of my tour, as if we had an obligation to maintain social relationships after all of the events in December, 1983.

Eventually, the Sharon-Lewis-Erlich story wound down in Israel at the end of December. I was still in the United States, on home leave, attending meetings in Washington, doing some diving and so forth. I returned to Israel at the end of the third week of January, 1984. From then for the next several months, Sharon continued his public attacks at every possible opportunity. Clearly, he was staking out his claim to replace Shamir as the Likud leader and therefore Prime Minister. He was using his attacks on U.S. policy and me personally as a way to marshal the support of the Likud party members. He had

no job in the Cabinet, although he had not lost his Ministerial title. He used his time to meet with Likud local branches; he sought and obtained platforms for his speeches, which were essentially allegations that U.S. policy, by now clearly failing in Lebanon—as was Israeli policy—was “due to the poor advice and almost criminal negligence of U.S. policy makers—Habib, Lewis, Weinberger, Draper and Veliotes”. We were the five targets that Sharon lumped together as the architects of the failed U.S. policy. We were the cause of the catastrophic consequences for Israel of the Lebanon “failure”, because, Sharon alleged, we had misled President Reagan, thereby leading the President to oppose the Israeli invasion; indeed, this faulty policy was responsible for the U.S. putting so much pressure on Begin that the invasion had to be halted prematurely, before complete Israeli success could be captured. It was therefore obviously, in Sharon's eyes, all the fault of the U.S. that had led to Israel having failed in Lebanon and it was clear that the same gang of five were causing U.S. policy in Lebanon to fail as well.

Weinberger was the only Washington-based official mentioned by Sharon. Cap was indeed a very central figure in U.S. policy making in Lebanon. He had been very skeptical about Israeli policy and was considered by many Israelis to be anti-Israel. He was the most vocal, prominent opponent of Israeli policy in the administration. He didn't miss any opportunities to publicly challenge that policy. He also argued most vigorously against sending U.S. Marines to Lebanon and was the strong proponent of removing them from there as soon as possible. For all these reasons, he was one of Sharon's targets.

This has to be understood within the environment then existing. During February and March, the final failure of U.S. policy in Lebanon became crystal clear. Therefore Sharon's speeches were made against the backdrop of the ignominious withdrawal of American Marines and other forces. The resistance of Amin Gemayel's government to Syrian efforts to extend its role in Lebanon was also collapsing. Furthermore, during the first week in March, the Lebanese government cancelled its ratification of the Lebanese-Israeli agreements reached in the preceding May. So both Israeli and American policies on Lebanon were turning out to be abject failures. That gave Sharon the opportunity not

only to attack these policies, but to use their failures as a vindication of his actions. He attributed the failure of these policies to the fact that his path had not been followed; the Americans had forced Begin to “waffle” instead of giving him full support for strong actions in Lebanon. As I said, these Sharon diatribes were political ploys in his game to replace Shamir as party leader. It was clear in early 1984 that the Shamir government, which he had inherited from Begin during the preceding September, would have to face the electorate sometime during that year. Shamir's majority was too frail to last any length of time. In fact, on March 28, the Knesset set the date for elections. On April 13, the Likud Party held a meeting of its Central Committee to select its leader. Shamir had been viewed as an interim leader when Begin stepped down. Sharon launched his campaign for the leadership and pressed it vigorously in the weeks prior to the Committee meeting.

In fact, Sharon lost. Shamir was confirmed as the Likud candidate for the Prime Ministership by vote of 407-306. That was the closest that Ariel Sharon ever came to winning the Party leadership. It came only a year after he had been forced out of the Defense Ministry. So he was still unpopular with the general public, but he had retained and regained a lot of strength within the Party. The vote was close enough to force Shamir to offer Sharon a Cabinet office. Sharon's campaign strategy, which involved savaging me and other American officials, made for a very unpleasant Spring in Israel. On at least one occasion in March, I raised with Shamir what I refer to as the “Sharon problem.” I discussed with the Prime Minister Sharon's continuing attacks and insults on the United States. I felt that he was publicly poisoning the relationships between the two countries, which had not been that great to start with. Privately, Shamir was very unhappy with Sharon's campaign, but politically, he was not in a position to block him publicly. No one has ever succeeded in stopping Sharon's mouth in any case—not even Begin.

The difficulties between Sharon and me dragged out through 1984 and 1985, although not as acute as in the Spring of 1984 when Sharon was making a run for party leadership. Then, a year later, as I was preparing to leave Israel after eight years, I gave my first TV interview and the final chapter of my relationship with Sharon opened the week before we

left. This was the only major TV interview during my tour in Israel. I had, (erroneously in retrospect) reached the conclusion at the beginning of my tour, that TV was not a good medium for me, because I did not speak Hebrew well enough to be interviewed. When you speak English in a Hebrew speaking country, the TV production uses sub-titles, which you can't control and may, therefore, not reflect the true essence of your comments. Moreover, the translation would never be a full one. So I decided that I would be better off not being interviewed on TV, except for some short comments or appearances. But no formal or serious interviews. I held to that position until just shortly before my departure when I was persuaded by the Kol Israel television correspondent, Ehud Ya'Ari—a friend—to do one farewell interview on MOKED, the major Israeli interview program, on May 22, 1985. There were actually two interviewers, Ya'Ari and Yoran Ronen, both of whom were very good. The interview in general received good reviews, particularly from journalists. During that interview, I was asked whether Sharon had ever given us in 1981 the detailed plans for the Lebanon invasion, I gave a brief and accurate response. That led to another explosion from Sharon, which lasted for the whole final ten day period before my departure from the country.

The first question asked of me was: “Mr. Ambassador, to what extent were you aware of the fact that Israel was going to open a war in Lebanon” I answered: “It was pretty clear to us by January or February, 1982 that the war was just waiting to happen and that there was a determination here not to let the PLO infrastructure in Lebanon continue much longer.” Then I continued by discussing the kinds of provocations that we thought might trigger a war. Then Ehud Ya'Ari asked me: “Was there any specific American warning to the Israeli government before the war against going all the way to Beirut?” I answered: “The subject of going all the way to Beirut really only came up before the war to my knowledge in two conversations. One was I think in the December 1981 when Phil Habib was down at General Sharon's ranch. I think the meeting was at the ranch, as I recall. (Note: I was incorrect; the meeting was at the Foreign Ministry in Jerusalem-I was not present.) And Minister Sharon described in some hypothetical detail, the concept of

what ultimately became known as “Big Pines”. (That was the Israeli code phrase for the Lebanon operation). Habib was, as I was and others of us were, dumbfounded by the audacity of the political concept that seemed to involve. Habib reacted at that point very vehemently. I don't remember his precise words and I perhaps wouldn't want to quote them anyway. Ehud Ya'Ari quoted them: (he had already written a book together with Zeev Schiff on the Lebanon war, part of which described very accurately this whole meeting, based on Israeli sources.) Ya'Ari said: “Habib said something like 'We are living in the 20th Century. Aren't we?'" I added: “He made it extraordinarily clear to Sharon that this was an unthinkable proposition as far as the U.S. government was concerned.” Then I proceeded to describe the second occasion which occurred during Sharon's meeting with Al Haig in late May, 1982 in Washington. During that meeting, Haig acknowledged Israeli's right to self-defense, but said that if Israel responded to attacks, it had to do so in a way proportionate to those attacks. That would enable the international community to understand the appropriateness of Israeli reaction. I then added: “The words 'going to Beirut' didn't occur in that conversation with Haig to my recollection, but the point was unmistakable.”

The interview set off a firestorm, partly because the press wrote about it as if I had revealed a great state secret! This added to already existing political pressures to reexamine the origins of the Lebanon War.

The debate heated up rapidly; every paper highlighted the story, often focusing on the alleged “shock” that an Israeli Defense Minister would have divulged to a foreign diplomat details of a military plan to invade Lebanon, even before discussing it with his own Cabinet or obtaining Cabinet approval. The incident provided fresh material for the many anti-Sharon journalists and politicians to use in calling for his impeachment or for another Commission of Inquiry to review the responsibility for the failure of the Lebanon War.

The next day, May 23, the Deputy Foreign Minister Yehuda Ben-Meir was interviewed on TV. He was asked about the allegation made against Sharon. He confirmed what I

had said on TV, because there had been two Foreign Ministry officials—Hanan Bar-on and Eytan Ben Tsur—in attendance at the meeting, which had taken place at the Foreign Ministry. They had been shocked by what they had heard and had reported to Ben Meir what they had heard. He in turn had reported it to Shamir, the Foreign Minister. So while Ben Meir tried to avoid becoming entangled in the Sharon-Lewis debate, he did say that he had seen reliable reports about the meeting which confirmed the accuracy of my comments. The Minister for Communications, Moshe Zipori, who had been the Deputy Minister of Defense at the time of the meeting, also confirmed my report. Neither of them had been at the meeting, but there had been 16-18 people there, half American and half Israeli. Habib, Draper, Brown (DCM), Paul Hare (the Embassy Political Counselor) and Colonel Raines (the Defense Attach#) had attended. So there were a lot of witnesses at the meeting; furthermore there was a protocol made by the Israelis and the Embassy had submitted full reports to Washington. I had not been there because I was in the U.S. at the time but of course I had later read the reports and heard oral accounts from our officials. In light of all the witnesses and the existence of written reports, it didn't seem wise for Sharon to object to my factual statements.

But he went ahead and called a press conference in May 23. He said inter alia: “Not only did no meeting take place at the ranch six months prior to the war, but I have never detailed any operational plans (he began to use the phrase “operational plans” to clear his role).” He said also that he had warned senior Egyptian officials that Israel might invade Lebanon. That statement did not sit well with the Egyptians. He went on to justify himself as best he could. He denied that Phil Habib had ever been at the ranch. He did admit that there had been a meeting at the Foreign Ministry, but he tried to explain away his initial assertion, which had been to call my statements “blatant lies. Lewis is a liar.” He used the Hebrew word “gass”, which I was told meant “gross, piggish, course”.

He repeated the accusation that I was lying several times in the course of the next few days in a series of interviews that he gave. He continually lumped Habib, Draper, Veliotes, Weinberger and Lewis as the cause of the war. He tried to justify himself by asserting

that he had tried repeatedly to warn the United States that unless it quickly resolved the PLO problem in Lebanon, Israel would have to take on the task in its own way. He denied that he had ever mentioned the code phrase; I had never said that he had—I had said that “it later became known as 'Big Pine'.” So, in as many ways as he could, Sharon tried to depict me as a liar by picking up some inaccuracies or vagueness in the answers to the two TV questions. Since I had answered the questions extemporaneously, I probably wasn't precise on all details.

The whole controversy sparked a very interesting debate, once again reviving the question of whether the Lebanon war was justified. Eventually, some of the commentators asked the question that if Sharon were trying to warn the Americans even by going too far in telling them the concept of an operation, how could six months later Ronald Reagan saying that the U.S. had no idea of Israeli intentions? The President seemed to have been totally surprised and affronted by the Israeli invasion. That question did raise a problem for the U.S. because I had publicly confirmed that we had indeed been given the broad concept of what turned out to become “Big Pine”. It is true that we didn't have the operational details, but we were certainly informed about many of the strategic details. Habib had reacted negatively, as he should have. That made Presidential surprise somewhat hard to sell.

That explains how Washington handled the uproar in Israel. When Sharon called me a “gass” liar, the Israeli correspondents in Washington asked the Department's press spokesman, Bernard Kalb, for his comments. The Embassy had immediately reported my TV interview and the subsequent furor giving the NEA Bureau the opportunity to draft press guidance, which totally supported my version of events. We had been told that this guidance would be issued as a press release. At the very last moment, someone—and I don't know who, but I suspect that it was Shultz—decided that it would be better not to become involved in the debate because of concern that the next question might well have been about why the U.S. had not taken stronger steps to prevent the Israeli invasion. So Kalb said that he could not answer the questions because they would involve discussions

of diplomatic exchanges which are never discussed publicly. The position taken by the Department infuriated me, particularly after having been assured that the Department would strongly support me. I put out a “clarifying” statement, describing more fully what I knew and what I had said. Then I called Dick Murphy, the NEA Assistant Secretary and Charlie Hill, Shultz's Executive Assistant (and my former Political Counselor) to express in colorful language my reaction of anger and disappointment to the Department's response to Sharon's attacks on me. That brought a change in the Department's position. On May 24, the next day, Ed Djerejian, then the deputy press spokesman, in answer to another question about the dispute, said: “As we said yesterday, without going into the details of diplomatic exchanges, we can confirm that Ambassador Lewis has described the United States' position on this matter with complete accuracy. We strongly object to any suggestions to the contrary. I will repeat that. We strongly object to any suggestions to the contrary.” Then he meandered a little, but didn't go beyond that, although he tried to square this admission with U.S. comments made months later that the Israeli invasion had caught us completely off-guard.

After making his public statement, Djerejian went on “background”, which was also fully covered by the press. He said: “We want to emphasize that beyond what was generally and publicly known, the United States government had no prior knowledge of the invasion of Lebanon.” Apparently, what the Bureau meant to say when it drafted that language —which Djerejian was instructed to stick to and not abandon for one inch—was that we obviously didn't know specifically about when the invasion would take place or how it would proceed. The press, of course, interpreted that comment as being contradictory to what I had revealed and others had known. We had had all sorts of warnings that something was coming.

I should note, parenthetically, that the opposition had seized on my comments to score points against the Likud and Sharon. The Likud had then to defend Sharon for political reasons. So my comments had become the subject of a fierce internal Israeli political dogfight. The statement that I put out was made at the beginning of a final meeting I held

on May 24 with the American press at the chancery in Tel Aviv. That was the last time I met with the correspondents as a group. I started out, in light of all of what had been said in the previous few days, by providing a clarification. I said: “I had no intention of intervening in internal Israeli affairs or encouraging any escalation of the public debate, which has erupted in the wake of my interview. I make this statement now merely to pay my debt as I conceive of it to the need for historical accuracy. The statement that I made on television, which produced such controversy, was in response to a question on an unrehearsed interview program. Since that interview and the reactions to it, I have reviewed the files and I discovered that I was indeed, as I thought I might be at the time, mistaken about the location of the meeting. But my recollections of the basic facts was accurate. The meeting did take place, the content was as described on television.” I said: “I was careful to characterize Minister Sharon's presentation as hypothetical.” I reviewed again who was present at the meeting and where it had taken place. I finished by saying: “The thrust of my answer was crystal clear and that was that such a meeting took place, that Phil Habib and other Americans were present and reported on it. At that meeting, Minister Sharon did present a hypothetical concept for a military operation in Lebanon. It was not a detail plan of operations, but in light of hindsight and what I read subsequently in the Israeli press and books by Israeli journalists, I can see it clearly resembled what came to be known as “Big Pines, although of course that name was not used during the meetings. Phil Habib reacted in vehement fashion. I do remember that he told Minister Sharon that the concept was unthinkable as far as the U.S. government was concerned and that is really all I want to say on the subject.” I did get some questions on the issue, but I pretty much stuck to the line I had taken in the opening statement.

Of course, that did not end the dispute. Several more days ensued with the story being headline material. Sharon gave another interview in which he vehemently attacked me again. Every political correspondent commented on the affair. The Washington Post carried three or four stories on the debate. Tom Friedman of the New York Times wrote one or two stories more, more or less factually describing the exchanges that were

occurring. I too was holding further interviews because these were my final days in Israel I met probably with eight or ten of the leading journalists or groups of journalists in the country, summing up my eight years as Ambassador, answering questions about past and current U.S. policies. I had a very long—two or three hours-session with the Jerusalem Post editorial staff, together with my wife Sallie. The Sharon-Lewis debate of course arose during these interviews and I basically answered them the same way as I had done for the American journalists. There was some elaboration necessary which became fodder for some additional stories. So, without intent, I was keeping the story alive as well as Sharon. One of the things I told the American correspondents, as example, in answer to a question, was that I thought the invasion of Lebanon had been a tragedy for both Israel and Lebanon and very harmful to the United States, not only because we had been diverted from the Middle East Peace process and because of the damage that the invasion had inflicted on the two societies most closely involved.

At one point, there was a question about Begin. The question was whether Begin had been true to the Camp David agreement in permitting new settlements against the wishes of Carter and others. I answered that I did not think that the Prime Minister had lived up to the spirit of Camp David, although I did admit that it was obvious to me that Begin believed that he had not violated his commitments to Carter—which was the opposite of Carter's views. I am convinced that Begin felt that his commitment for restraint on new settlements was for only a three month period after Camp David. My comment even brought Begin out of his retirement; he had not been heard from in months. But in light of my comments, he actually gave a couple of statements to the press. Some journalist called him at home and read him my comments about the settlements issue. Begin said: “The outgoing Ambassador, Sam Lewis, never told me that the settlement policy in the territories was in contradiction to the spirit of Camp David, though we used to meet frequently.” Begin then pointed out that my comments were new to him, but that I was entitled to think as I did and to express my opinions. He went on to note that his government's policy on the territories were well known to the American administration and that Carter clearly realized

that after the three months' settlement freeze following Camp David, further settlements would be established. He also commented on the Sharon affair by saying that according to the Department's statement, it was clear that the Defense Minister had not divulged any operational plans. He finished his statement by saying some kind words about my work and about the good relations that he and I had enjoyed.

After the passage of a few more days, John Goshko of The Washington Post, under a headline that read “Ambassador was accurate on his report of Sharon's plans, State Department says.” In the meantime Phil Habib was interviewed in California by Israeli correspondents; he refused to talk about the details of the meeting, but he did vouch strongly for my credibility on the subject. The fact that I had given a rare “on the record” interview made the whole episode seem much more dramatic to the Israelis. Everybody in Israel, of course, always looks “under the rocks” for possible motives. The press was full of speculation about my motives; questions were raised and answered about why I, all of a sudden, decided to attack Sharon—that was the way my interview was incorrectly always characterized. The answer according to the journalists and pundits was that I had suffered in silence, more or less, for three years despite Sharon's continuous attacks and that I had finally decided to get even. Some journalists, who had been very unhappy about U.S. policy because we had not tried hard enough to stop the invasion, described me as the architect of that policy, which also included sympathy for Israeli actions in Lebanon. David Landau, the foreign affairs correspondent for the Jerusalem Post—a brilliant journalist, left-wing, anti-war—had always been very critical of me because I was too close to Begin and other Likud leaders. He always had voiced the opinion that I had not been tough enough on Likud and that my reporting to Washington must have influenced Haig in his sympathetic view of the Israeli invasion. He wrote an article entitled “Speaking for Sharon”. In it he said: “I wish Ariel Sharon had commissioned me to defend him from the attack from out-going Ambassador Samuel Lewis. I could have done a much better job than he did with this pathetic misrepresentation of the facts in his television appearance.” Then he went on to make me essentially the villain who had “played ball” with Begin and

Sharon and who had led the American government in being far too tolerant of the Israeli government's excesses. So I received mixed reviews in the press, although on the whole, I think the press was much more in my corner than in Sharon's, although he also received some sympathy from a number of commentators. There were also those who were critical of me for having raised this issue in the way I did.

About May 27, I attended a meeting with Foreign Minister Shamir in his office. I said to him, as I was leaving, that I had hoped that my interview and the subsequent furor that it raised had not caused him any unnecessary angst. I apologized for any political difficulties that I may have raised; it had not been my intention to do so. He told me, very graciously, not to worry about it. Of course, this episode appeared in the press the next day characterizing my conversation with Shamir as an “apology”. That was just another illustration of how few things in Israel remain out of the public domain for very long, particularly if they have political connotations.

A week later, the leading commentator for Haaretz wrote an article quoting Proverbs: “He that rolleth the stone, it will turn upon him”, essentially suggesting that my statement on TV, which he was certain had been well planned before hand—since I was too smart to speak without having calculated the consequences—had come back to point out once again that the U.S. government knew a lot about what would happen and did far too little to head it off. The controversy continued to play in the press for another ten days, in almost every paper. Finally, in my last days in Tel Aviv, as Bob Flaten was beginning to act as charg#, I had an interview with NBC Today Show; the same issue arose. That night, Peres, then the Prime Minister, who had remained completely silent throughout this period, but who was a good friend, gave Sallie and me a farewell dinner. It was an extraordinary event which took place at the Peres official home in Jerusalem. Every member of the Cabinet and his wife was invited. This was a Cabinet of national unity, which meant that both Likud and Labor participated in it. One of the more interesting questions was whether Ariel Sharon would attend. He did not—fortunately. Shamir wasn't there either because he had to be in London that night. He and the Foreign Ministry had already hosted a

formal dinner for us a few days earlier. The Peres dinner was an absolutely wonderful evening. An excessive number of accolades were spoken; Peres presented me a very large book about one meter high and 3/4 of a meter wide covered with felt. It was a tribute to Ben Gurion that Peres had written along with Abba Eban. A limited special edition had been printed in Paris in both French and English. The Israeli painter Agam had been commissioned to do a series of plates to illustrate the book. So the book contains about 15 original Agam plates depicting various aspects of Ben Gurion's life. Only 70 copies of this book were ever printed and we were fortunate enough to receive one copy, which was a beautiful memento of our years in Israel.

I should add, that on the night of May 23—the day after my TV interview—I had sat next to Peres at a banquet at the Knesset which was honoring the retiring chief of the Israeli equivalent of our Government Accounting Office. During the ceremonies, Peres passed me a note which said: “Sam, unfortunately I did not see Moked, but everybody is praising you immensely. I heard over the radio what Sharon and what Ben-Meir said: that Sam Lewis never lies. I shall refer to this matter openly and clearly. You surely are free to take any steps you feel proper. SP”. That last statement alludes to something that I had said to Peres privately earlier at the dinner. As I have said before, I was really upset at being called a liar by Sharon. I recalled immediately what Mrs. Erlich had said two years earlier about the previous Sharon attack—namely that I should have sued him for libel. I was thinking seriously about doing so in May, 1985. Sharon was embroiled at the time in a libel case against TIME magazine. It was a quixotic thought, but I did consider the possibility very seriously. I mentioned this possible course to Peres at the dinner and probably asked his advice; that I believe is the reference in his note.

In the next few days, I thought about that libel suit possibility a lot. I talked to two of the most distinguished Israeli lawyers on a very confidential basis. I asked whether they thought that bringing a suit was a practical idea. Both thought that it would not be, because Sharon, as a Knesset member, has parliamentary immunity. It was true that immunity was not all encompassing, but both lawyers had serious reservations that my suit would be

allowed to be pursued. Moreover, they really didn't think it was worth pursuing, although both were willing to take the case if I insisted. I took their advice and dropped the matter.

On June 2, the same day of the Peres farewell dinner, Akiva Eldar, the political correspondent of the Haaretz—now here in Washington as that newspaper's correspondent—wrote the following short story:

“US Ambassador to Israel, Samuel Lewis, considered filing a libel suit against Minister Sharon and had consulted a number of lawyers on the issue. Lewis was mainly offended by Sharon's remark calling him a liar as well as Sharon's accusations that Lewis' reports to Washington had damaged US interests and had not been reliable. Lewis thought of filing the suit after he leaves his post, but apparently decided against it when told that Sharon has parliamentary immunity. Lewis leaves his post this week. He returns to Washington and will come back to Israel at year's end to do some research at the Dayan Center. Last night Lewis declined to comment on the libel suit issue.”

That was the last installment, almost. On June 9, an article appeared in the New York Times written by Anthony Lewis under the headline “What Lebanon Meant—Force Can Be a Delusion” in which he said, inter alia:"The story of how General Sharon bullied and deceived his Cabinet colleagues so that he could have his large scale political war has been told before. But a fascinating new account has just come from Samuel W. Lewis, who is retiring after years of distinguished service as American Ambassador to Israel. Mr. Lewis said that in December, 1981, six months before the invasion, General Sharon described his ambitious war plans to US diplomats who were dumb-founded by the political concept and considered it unthinkable. When General Sharon denied the Ambassador's account, the State Department took the pointed step (?), stating that 'Mr. Lewis had spoken with complete accuracy'. This history is highly relevant today because Ariel Sharon is. One might have expected the man with the futile deaths of 654 Israeli soldiers on his conscience to fade from the political scene, but Sharon is not faded. And

the philosophy he expounds, force as a political solution, is very much alive...” The rest of the story is in the same vein.

That, I believe, is enough about Sharon and Lewis—perhaps already too much. But my relationships with the General do provide an interesting footnote to history.

Interview No. 14

Q: I believe it would be useful if you could describe the peculiar and unique situation of the Consulate General in Jerusalem, which operates independently of the Embassy in Tel Aviv. That situation has I believe on occasions caused some difficulties.

LEWIS: The Consulate General in Jerusalem is a unique story in American diplomatic history. It had been established before the State of Israel came into being; it was founded in the 1840s and had been maintained through the Turkish and British dominion over Palestine. It became a well established center of American activity in the region. The Principal Officer was usually an Arab specialist. When Israel was founded in 1948, an American embassy was established in Tel Aviv. For the following thirty years, there was considerable tension between the Embassy and the Consulate General. The CG was never under the formal jurisdiction of the Embassy for diplomatic reasons. The US has never recognized, and does not do so today, the de jure Israeli sovereignty over Jerusalem. Our position has always been that we will not do so until the parties in the dispute agree on the final status of the city. The State Department always believed that the Consulate General had to be maintained as a separate consular and reporting entity. The CG is responsible for providing consular services in the city of Jerusalem and its environs; it is also responsible for reporting on and maintaining contacts with the Palestinians living in the West Bank. The Embassy in Tel Aviv, at least until now, maintained responsibilities for activities in the Gaza Strip, which became an occupied territory in 1967. So the US government has divided the responsibility for dealing with Palestinians with the Gazians

relating to the Embassy while the West Bank and Jerusalem inhabitants have been the responsibility of the CG in Jerusalem.

When I arrived in Israel in 1977, the tradition for many years had been one of great hostility and arms-length relationship between the two American establishments. That attitude was particularly acute as it impacted on the personal relationship between the Ambassador and the Consul General. I am told that in the 1950s and 1960s, the Consul General would not permit the Ambassador to visit Jerusalem without his permission. The CG also prohibited the Ambassador to fly the American flag in the limousine once the car had crossed the city limits. It was the CG's position that once the Ambassador had crossed that line he was “no longer in Israel”. This position was maintained in the face of the fact that much of the Israeli government was headquartered in Jerusalem which of course required frequent visits by Embassy officials to the city. By the 1970s and 1980s, the whole Israeli government, except the Defense Ministry was located in Jerusalem. Over the years, the tensions between the principals and their staffs did not diminish. There are a lot of stories about the animosities between the two American establishments. I must say that when I arrived in Israel, the relationship was not nearly as bad as I had been led to believe. But there were still “territorial” disputes and some tensions. We had a very good Consul General, Mike Newlin, in 1977. Mike was an Arabist who had a great affinity for the Palestinian cause. He was also a very disciplined and able officer, which brought some objectivity to the situation. The Israelis had always deeply resented that the Consul General did not report to the Ambassador in Tel Aviv and worst of all, had no official relationship with the National Israeli government. The sole exception to that rule was on consular matters where the CG and the Consular Section of the Israeli Foreign Ministry had continuing contacts. That was a function essentially of Israeli policy. Since we didn't recognize the de jure status of the Israeli government in Jerusalem, it did not recognize the official existence of our Consulate General, although, as I said, there were contacts on certain matters. And, of course, the Consul General and his staff dealt regularly with the Mayor of Jerusalem and other municipal officials. Other Israeli officials never set foot

in the Consulate General building or the private home of the Consul General. They never attended his Fourth of July reception; in fact, I am not sure that after a while the CG even invited them. So there were continuing tensions between the Israeli government and the CG. The Foreign Ministry was quite suspicious of the activities of the CG; they viewed our representation in Jerusalem as a nest of PLO supporters who were conspiring with the Palestinians against the welfare of the Jewish State. The fact that the CG didn't report to the Embassy heightened that suspicion.

I worked very hard throughout my whole tour to get this problem under control. I believe I had considerable success and I am very proud of what we accomplished. Essentially, I took the view that both establishments were representing the US government; we took the same orders from Washington from the same policy makers. I firmly believed that we needed to work together; we needed to exchange information. In some cases, I thought that joint Embassy-CG messages to Washington were appropriate. Above all, I felt strongly that the two staffs and their leaders had to collaborate as professionals and could not let the bureaucratic rivalries that had existed in the past interfere with the achievement of US goals. I understood that we might hear different versions of the same story: we in Tel Aviv would hear then Israeli point of view whereas the Consulate General would hear the Palestinian version. That fact of life should not inhibit us from pursuing US government policy. I think this approach worked quite well. From the beginning, I thought that the key to close teamwork was a respect that the Ambassador and the Consul General had for each other. If in addition they liked each other and might even be friends that would have added another dimension. So the CG and I talked frequently over the phone and in fact saw each other personally quite often. That brought the staffs closer together and they were able to work with each other reasonably well. I cultivated the relationship and Mike Newlin welcomed it. He was very gracious. I began the practice of trying to stop at the Consulate General as often as I could while I was in Jerusalem. I would then spend some time discussing issues with Mike and later on with his successors, Brandon Grove, Wat Cluverius and Maury Draper. I am not sure that my efforts were ground breaking, but I

do believe that I had more contacts with the CG than had my predecessors. I invited the Consul General—I urged him—to come to our weekly staff meeting in Tel Aviv which he frequently did. That was helpful because it enabled some of my staff to hear the CG's views first hand. He found the visits helpful both for substantive and administrative reasons; we provided considerable administrative support for the CG. For example, we handled the CG's budgetary matters since it didn't have a full time B&F officer. The regional security officer, stationed in Tel Aviv, provided services to the CG.

As time passed, certain issues would arise which would engender concerns in one establishment or another. Typically, those tensions rose either between political or the administrative sections, but I found that we were able to minimize the frictions as long as the principals could maintain frequent communications. I urged all of my staff to remember that in the Embassy-CG relationship, we were the giant in size and much closer to the Israeli government so that we could deal with issues that often frustrated the CG. So when the CG had a problem with the Israeli government as it frequently did, its only recourse was to get the Embassy involved on its side. The issues most often dealt with travel in the occupied territories or consular matters or picture taking. We were the only American establishment that could represent the CG in its relationships with the Israeli government. Eventually the CG got the Israeli military government to at least talk to it about consular cases. There were a lot of American citizens living in the West Bank; some invariably would become involved with the military government often about anti-Israel activities. These citizens had the right to US representation. So over a period of time, the working relationships between the Embassy and the CG became closer, even though it increased our workload as the sole recognized representatives to the Israeli government.

I also decided upon my arrival in Tel Aviv that it was extremely important that I have an important role in the selection of the Consul General. That had to be done on an informal basis by means of my network in Washington. I can honestly say that I had a major role in the selection of Grove and all his successors. I wanted to make sure that the Consul General would be someone who would carry on and perhaps even enhance the

cooperation that Mike Newlin and I had engendered. It just happened, therefore, that all of the CGs that followed Newlin were old friends of mine. So I was pleased with the evolving cooperation between the Embassy and the Consulate General. The basic problem still exists and will always exist until there is some resolution of the Jerusalem problem. It is a crazy organizational relationship, but it is manageable. It is unheard of elsewhere that an Embassy is not located in the same city that is viewed as the capital by the host country.

Another ingredient that improved the teamwork between the Embassy and the Consulate General during my tour was the long series of visits by Secretaries of State, starting with Vance in the pre-Camp David period. There were also frequent visits by the special emissaries. Habib particularly, while the principal Middle East peace negotiator, was coming to and leaving Israel almost every other day. He shuttled between Beirut and Jerusalem. It became very inconvenient for me to drive to Jerusalem so often. Part of my staff was essentially relocated to Jerusalem to support the peace process. The Embassy, historically, had leased a suite in the King David Hotel for the use of the Ambassador and senior Embassy officials who had to spend nights in Jerusalem; it was also used as an office when necessary. But the Habib shuttle was so intense that a suite was just not adequate. We were forced to use the Consulate General's facilities, particularly his communications channels. Mike, Brandon, Wat, and Maury cooperated fully and we began to use the Consulate General as a second set of offices whenever we had official visitors who needed government support. We would hold meetings in the CG, often in its secure area. We would use its secure telephone to communicate with Washington so that we wouldn't have to drive back to Tel Aviv every time we wanted to talk to Washington. We sent cables from the CG, although the top of the message made it clear that the text came from the Embassy or from Habib. In this way, the Consul General became involved, and sometimes members of his staff, in the peace process. That made them a part of the team which under previous situations would not have been allowed. The CGs made substantive contributions and brought another dimension to bear on our deliberations. This practice became well established and as far as I know, still prevails today. In any case, during

my period in Israel, the new involvement of the CG made considerable difference to the collaboration between the American establishments in Tel Aviv and Jerusalem. So today, even though the Consulate General is an independent operation not under the control of the US Ambassador to Israel—as would be true in all other countries—there developed a de facto team operation much of the time I was in Israel.

Q: I wanted to also ask you about your impressions of Aaron Yariv and Teddy Kollek.

LEWIS: They were both close friends. General Yariv died a few months ago. I knew him well, although I knew Teddy Kollek better. I regard Teddy and his wife Tamar as very close friends of Sallie's and mine to this day. Both Yariv and Kollek are examples of the best of Israeli society and leadership of an earlier generation. Yariv, who had been the Director of Military Intelligence for a number of years going back to before the Six Day War, was the most successful of all Directors. He survived in that job without ever becoming involved in a lot of difficulties, which was no easy task. After he retired from the Army, he became an informal advisor to the government. He was a very balanced, moderate, serious and sensible gentleman. He impressed every one who knew him with his sound judgment; his advice was always dependable. His military record was very distinguished, but I will always remember him as being a very fine human being. Sometime after his retirement, he came to the conclusion that Israel needed some kind of strategic policy think tank, separate from the government. Such did not exist in Israel at the time. There were a couple of research institutes—one at Tel Aviv University and one at Hebrew University—but they did not deal with strategic policy issues. They were essentially academic research institutes. So Yariv decided to build an institution somewhat analogous to the Center for Strategic and International Studies in Washington. That became the model. He raised the necessary funds by himself in the United States and managed to collect a fairly substantial endowment. Then he went to Tel Aviv University and asked them whether they wanted to be the host institution for his new center. He made it quite clear that the new center would have to remain independent because he didn't want it to become another academic institution. He wanted his center to be perceived by the government and other segments

of Israeli society as a solid base for policy research whose output had relevance to current problems and the Israeli decision making process. After very difficult negotiations, he managed to convince Tel Aviv University to give the new center its independence. I believe that that center has become one of the ornaments of Israeli society. Yariv, after having launched the center successfully and having headed it for a number of years, was on the verge of retiring when he had an automobile accident and a stroke at the same time. He never recovered from these two afflictions and died a few months later. I always will regard him as a good friend and, as I said, an outstanding example of an Israeli military generation which created the IDF and brought it to a very high state of professionalism. I met him first in 1977 when he came to see me as a member of a group which was forming a new party, the Democratic Movement for Change, led by General Yigal Yadin, Israel's most famous archaeologist, as well as the IDF's first Chief of Staff. He had retired from the Army many years earlier, but he now launched the first major “third” party. Yariv became active in that party and that is how we met; we remained good friends for the rest of his life.

Kollek was the mayor of Jerusalem for my whole tour. He was MR. JERUSALEM. We became very fond of the Kolleks, Teddy and Tamar. They are very fond of my wife Sallie. We took every opportunity to be together with them, even though Jerusalem was officially not under my jurisdiction. I had admired Teddy from afar for a long time. I felt fortunate that I could work with him, closely on several occasions, on some of the trickier aspects of our Jerusalem policy, which he very much resented. He did not like that we would not recognize all of Jerusalem as Israel's capital. He made his displeasure eminently clear by never going to the Consulate General's Fourth of July parties. Historically, the CG had two parties: one in east Jerusalem, where we had a branch office, and one for west Jerusalem. During Wat Cluverius' tenure, Kollek succeeded in having the CG host only one Fourth of July event, for both the east and west Jerusalemers. When that happened, Kollek attended as a symbolic act of his approval for the CG's new approach. I think Teddy is one of the great heroes of his generation. He made Jerusalem a different city. He raised funds

for it abroad. He did everything a mayor could do to foster an atmosphere of peaceful coexistence between the Jewish and the Palestinian communities. He of course could not solve the basic political issue, but Jerusalem, as it is today, is a memorial to Teddy Kollek. The city's budget would never have been adequate to fund any of the modernization projects that Kollek built. He developed new parks, new schools, new clinics, all funded by the Jerusalem Foundation which was the recipient of all the funds that Teddy raised privately abroad. He was crusty and some people often found him difficult to get along with because he was always outspoken. He called as he saw them without reference to diplomatic niceties, which he might have learned during his early career during and after the War of Independence as an intelligence agent and diplomat. He had been the right hand man to Ben Gurion for many years. I am sure that, if he had chosen national politics, he could have become a serious candidate for the Prime Ministership. I am not sure how a Kollek regime would have fared. He didn't enjoy party politics. In the 1970s, he decided that he would devote himself to Jerusalem, although he never abandoned his allegiance to the Labor Party. He was a close friend and ally of Shimon Peres throughout his career. That fact may also have dissuaded him from pursuing a national stage which might have been put in competition with Peres. I remember that sometime in 1988, after I had left US government service, I had returned to Israel for a visit. We had dinner with Kollek during that trip; he was then in his late 70s. This was a period during which the Labor Party was in great difficulties. The peace process had stalled; Peres' fortunes were declining. He and Rabin were at sword points; Shamir and the Likud were very much in ascendancy. Teddy told me that evening that he thought that he might have made a mistake in not becoming a candidate for Prime Minister because the Labor leadership then did not seem up to the challenge. He worried about the future of the country if the Palestinian issue was not resolved and if a peace were not established. But he admitted that by then, he was too old to start in national politics. I am not sure in any case whether he would have succeeded, but we will never know because he had waited too long to consider a run for Prime Minister. We have to remember that he became Mayor first in 1964; twenty-eight years later he ran once too often and was beaten. He knew well before that last election

that the time to retire had come. He in fact had announced that he would retire in view of his advanced age, even though he was still maintaining a schedule that a man half his age would find daunting. But he was getting very cranky and his health was beginning to fail him. He felt frustrated and limited by his advancing years. The trouble was that his own “Independent Jerusalem” party had no readily available successor; like so many other great men; Teddy could never bring himself to groom a successor. He tried a couple and then dumped them. The same thing happen to de Gaulle, Churchill, Roosevelt and many others. They don't want to consider that age will catch with them and that the world will have to go on without them. That thought was too threatening. Kollek didn't either, so there was not anyone from his party that had a chance to win the election. The Likud had fielded a younger, very attractive candidate, Ehud Olmert. Peres particularly and Rabin also pleaded with Teddy repeatedly to run for office because he was the only who could hold the city against the right wing at a very delicate moment in the peace process. They were concerned that if a right wing candidate won, he would bring the religious conservatives with him and that the hard won comity that existed in Jerusalem would be lost. Kollek weakened under the flattery and the pressure; he ran and was beaten badly. It was a terrible way for his career to end. Many of his friends abandoned him; many didn't vote at all because they agreed with him that he was too old. So they just abstained. Peres and Rabin bear some of the responsibility, but Kollek was their only hope to keep hold of Jerusalem. Teddy left office very dejected and somewhat irked, having devoted nearly thirty years to Jerusalem as mayor. He is still very active today trying to find ways to help the city, although his successor is not being very gracious and receptive. He is slowly, but surely, pushing Kollek out of the picture in a way that he certainly does not deserve.

Q: Kollek was one of the first people to warn Washington about Philby, the British spy. He had known Philby in Vienna. He knew that the first Mrs. Philby was a member of the Communist Party. He warned people in Washington to be careful about Philby. His advice was not heeded sufficiently.

LEWIS: I guess I had heard that story. Kollek, of course, had very close contacts with the CIA and the State Department because, as I mentioned, his early career was in intelligence work. He was the Mossad's (or its predecessor) representative in Washington.

I have never seen any one as good in inspiring groups to support certain causes as Teddy was. His cause was of course Jerusalem. He had lots and lots of friends, particularly in the United States. I benefited to a certain extent from his wide network because we are both cigar smokers. I used to smoke mine very publicly when I was in Israel. That was well known as one of my traits. Teddy was also known as a cigar lover and received gift boxes of Havana cigars from all over the world as token of admiration. He could never had smoked them all. So he shared his surplus with some of his friends. He always gave me at least once a year and sometimes twice a year a box of Havanas. He continues to remember my addiction and whenever we see each other, he gives me some cigars, although of course his supply has greatly diminished. That love for cigars was a bond between us in addition to a lot of other attachments.

Jerusalem is littered with monuments to Teddy Kollek's success for raising money. He was very particular about the designs of the buildings that were put up during his tenure. He monitored very closely the investment of the funds that he had collected worldwide. He has left a legacy in Jerusalem that few others leave anywhere. He left his collection of artifacts, which was quite extensive, to the Israel Museum.

Q: I would like to turn for a moment to the group of observers that were stationed in the Sinai passes. You mentioned earlier the unfortunate demise of the head of that unit, Ray Hunt. I would like to know a little more about that program, how it got started and how it operated.

LEWIS: That operation was called the “Multi- National Force and Observers” (MFO). They idea rose from the stalemate that had occurred in the Security Council after the signing of the Egypt-Israel peace treaty. As we drafted that treaty, it was understood

that the Israeli would insist that an international force be placed in the buffer zone once they had withdrawn from the Sinai Peninsula. They also insisted that, unlike the UN Peacekeeping Force that existed in Sinai between 1956 and 1967 (UNEF II) and which was withdrawn suddenly at Nasser's insistence, this new force had to be in the Sinai with a firm guarantee that it could not be withdrawn unless both Israel and Egypt agreed. As we drafted the peace treaty, we included a provision providing for a multi-national force of UN peacekeepers. But we were very much aware that the Soviets opposed the Camp David initiative and did not play any role whatsoever in that effort. We thought it very likely that they would veto in the Security Council any proposal to establish such a force. Nevertheless, the treaty calls for a UN peace keeping force. Because we thought it highly unlikely that the Security Council would approve this provision, we drafted side letters for Carter to provide to Begin and Sadat, assuring them that the U.S. would see to the provision of a multi-national force outside the UN framework, if the Security Council could or would not approve it.

As we suspected, the treaty, although widelyapproved by many countries, never received approval by the UN. That was one of the UN derelictions that have annoyed me since Camp David. The Soviets made it eminently clear that if any resolution relating to the peace treaty were brought before the Security Council, they would veto it. The US, for reasons that I then and now believe were quite erroneous, didn't challenge the Soviets. I always thought it would have been much better to table a resolution of support for the peace treaty, including a mandate for a peace keeping force, and leave it up to the Soviets to exercise their veto against a very popular agreement. They would have had to accept an international onus for their veto, but the US government decided not to force the issue. So the peace treaty never had a UN blessing until many years later.

Upon signing of the treaty, we started to form a peacekeeping force, outside the UN framework, as we had promised to do. We decided to use a UN force as a model, but to use a somewhat different structure. Michael Sterner, then Deputy Assistant Secretary in NEA, was assigned to lead the negotiations between the three major countries involved:

Israel, Egypt and the US. He was supposed to come up with a formula for a multinational force which would satisfy the requirements spelled out in the peace treaty and which would satisfy the Israelis who were the ones that were insisting on a force. Egypt really didn't want a force in Sinai, but Israel would not have signed the treaty without it.

Sterner did an outstanding job of negotiations. I was personally very much involved when the negotiations took place in Israel. I thought he handled himself extremely well. In the final analysis, we established a unique structure, headed by a Director General of the MFO, who was to be headquartered in Rome. That DG was to be an American civilian. He was in many respects the analogue to the UN Secretary General. The international force that was to be present in the Sinai would consist of approximately 3000 people, drawn from a dozen or more nations under the command of a non-American general. It was understood that we would seek for that position someone who had had some experience in leading a multinational force from the NATO command structure. In fact, we chose a Norwegian as the first commander. Each of his successors have been Scandinavians, although none of their troops were involved. The first commander was a brilliant soldier/ diplomat. He had been on the NATO staff for a long time and was very skilled in the diplomatic side of his tasks. The major challenge was to get contributions of troops. One of the most important aspects of the negotiations was the agreement we managed to get approved that unlike UN peace keeping forces which are totally funded by the UN budget, in this case Egypt, Israel and the US would each pay one-third of the costs of the operation. That provided major incentive in keeping costs down. It also was concrete demonstration that the force was being established for the benefit of the two signatories to the peace treaty. It was a formula that I have often argued should be adopted by the UN for all of its peace-keeping operations wherever the benefiting countries can afford it. These forces are established for the benefit of the countries involved and should therefore be supported financially by them, instead of the international community at large. Recently, the UN has taken that approach in one or two cases.

Vance, Hal Saunders, the Assistant Secretary for NEA and Sterner with many other State officials were involved in seeking participants in the force. Initially, we were met with a lot of skepticism even from our best allies, like the British and French. They were very concerned about their participation because the Arab world, except Egypt, had rejected the peace treaty. That raised in their minds the effect of their participation on their relations with Arab countries. They depended to a considerable extent on the oil from the Persian Gulf states as well as their exports to Saudi Arabia; that gave them considerable pause, because they viewed their participation in the multinational force as potentially damaging to their political and economic interests. Carter and Vance had to lean very hard on some of the European governments to contribute their troops. Ultimately, we managed to get three infantry battalions to man one-third of the line from Rafah to Sharm el Sheikh. The US agreed to provide one battalion and we watched one third of the line. In addition, there were logistical support units, a small navy to patrol the Straits of Tiran (three mine sweepers from Italy) and then there was the observer force. There were about sixty-five officers (many former officers and now civilians) who made up the observer force. They were mobile, using helicopters and light aircraft to survey the terrain to make sure that the force limitations in the treaty were being observed. The treaty limited the Egyptians to certain forces in certain zones, which the observers inspected continually. They were under the command of the Scandinavian generals, but separate from the ground forces. The observer force was largely American.

I think finally about twelve countries contributed to the MFO. The New Zealanders, I believe, sent a helicopter unit. The Ecuadorians sent some troops as did the Columbians. There were two or three European countries who participated finally. The Fijians sent some troops; Fiji also had sent some men to the UNIFIL force in Lebanon, some of whom were transferred to the Sinai. So the international representation was pretty good by the time the negotiations were completed. The Sinai operation is quite extraordinary; it is not widely known even though it is still operating today. There have been American forces in the Sinai as part of the MFO since 1982 when the force was established. That

is twelve years and very few people are aware of our participation or the existence of the MFO. There have been practically no incidents, but the main reason for its success is that both Egypt and Israel wanted peace to be maintained. The MFO is a plate glass window, which is tailor made for the prevention of escalation should any incidents occur. And there haven't been any significant ones. For leave, the MFO members go to Cairo, Jerusalem and Elat. I think most enjoy their tour. They wear distinctive MFO uniform, complete with an orange logo that we designed. It is a very interesting operation which still uses about 2500 people. Bureaucratically, it was not placed under the Defense Department; it was strictly a State Department operation, although it was formally launched as part of the NSC system and was supported by the NSC staff. Ultimately, I think that office was transferred to the State Department. The logistic support was contracted to private firms by the MFO using the State Department as a channel. The headquarters in Rome has now its own procurement office and provides the required administrative support. The military headquarters are in El Arish.

The headquarters staff in Rome is rather small, consisting of less than forty people. The MFO has representatives in Israel and in Egypt and because of the arrangements that the governments were anxious to foster, the MFO buys its supplies usually in the two countries, to the extent that they are available. The first year's costs was somewhere between $80 and $90 million. That has been reduced over the years and I believe that the current annual costs are about $45 million, shared equally by the three countries.

It has been an interesting model for peace keeping, but I don't think it will ever be duplicated. Given the current world situation, I don't foresee the need of promulgating a peace keeping operation outside the UN framework. There are many advantages to conducting within that framework, although I doubt that the UN can conduct as an efficient operation as the MFO is. That effort is a real tribute to the diplomatic skills not only of those who put it together in the first place, but also of those who participated in it for these twelve years. I have mentioned Ray Hunt, the first Director General, who was assassinated. I have never understood why he was targeted. It was during a period when

terrorists were focusing on Westerners in general, especially French and Americans. Our embassies were very heavily guarded. Ray, who was not part of the Embassy in Rome, had offices and living quarters apart from the American compounds. He obviously worked with the embassy, but he was not under the ambassador's jurisdiction. He therefore had no security protection and he may have been targeted because of that. I don't know. I do know that it was a tragedy. The current Director General is Wat Cluverius, whom I mentioned when discussing the status of our Consulate General in Jerusalem. He married an Israeli after his tour as Consul General in Jerusalem, although he probably met her during his stay there. They now live in Rome. Under the terms of the arrangement, US government officials had to retire or resign from their employment to participate in the MFO. Wat did that. Ray Hunt and Peter Constable did the same thing.

Q: Based on your Middle East experience, what are your views of public opinion polls?

LEWIS: Israeli polling was less reliable than the American process. They have sophisticated, Western-trained pollsters, but the results do not seem to be as reliable as they are in the US. I am not sure that I understand why that is. But I watched them carefully because I believe they are indicative. I did not rely on the absolute numbers, but I thought that the trends that the polls revealed were important and probably accurate. If polls indicated shifting attitudes over a period of time, that I thought was a reliable indicator. Election polls ran pretty close to the final count. There were certainly as accurate as ours are. A poll were taken currently on whether Israelis would be willing to surrender all of the Golan Heights in exchange for a real peace with Syria would show that only 32% of Israelis would buy that proposition even though 50% would be willing to give up part of the Heights for peace. I don't take those figures very literally because there is no deal that could be judged by the Israeli public: the polls have to rely on some hypothetical and vague notion of withdrawal and full peace. But I take seriously that, over the period of the last two years, that question, which has been asked by the same polling firm, has shown a steady trend of increasing support of the proposition. Two years ago, perhaps 8% of the Israelis were prepared to surrender all of the Golan for peace. That clearly shows

me that over the last two years, there has been a steady shift in support for the complete withdrawal from the Golan Heights. The detection of such trends I think make polls useful even though the percentages may not be entirely accurate.

Q: What are your views of the Mossad? Is it a "rogue elephant"? In that same vein, what are your views of Israeli espionage efforts in the US, as illustrated by the "Pollard affair "? I ask that in part because when Angleton was CIA's counter-intelligence chief, there had been an understanding that there would not be any espionage efforts among allies, but the Israelis may have skirted that understanding.

LEWIS: I believe that the Mossad is fully under he control of the Prime Minister and his senior associates. I do not believe that it is a "rogue elephant". Any intelligence organization, including the CIA, has at sometime during its history included certain operators who might have gone beyond policy limits in certain circumstances. It is my impression, however, that the Mossad is not only under pretty tight control, but that it is also quite disciplined about its undertakings and about what it does not do. Interestingly enough, if there have any problems, they have been with the Shin Beth, which is the internal security apparatus, analogous to our FBI. The Shin Beth has been charged with dealing with one of Israel's most difficult problem; i.e. terrorism in Israel itself and in territories just immediately outside Israel's borders. It is responsible for penetrating Palestinian terrorist organizations to forestall attacks; it has to do that by identifying and arresting suspected terrorists. The Shin Beth has generated a couple of scandals in the last decade stemming from some of its field operatives, who, in the midst of a terrorist threat, have either killed or tortured Arabs in order to extract information about a potential attack. After taking such actions, these Shin Beth agents lied to their superiors about their actions because they had exceeded their own ground rules. These actions, when revealed, engendered some major scandals, resulting in some Shin Beth senior officials being dismissed. I am not aware of anything like that happening in the Mossad, except for one case that occurred long before my arrival in Israel. In general, however, I believe that both are responsible services. It is true that in the heat of the struggle against terrorism,

a lot of excesses may have been committed, but, as I said, that was more a problem for the Shin Beth than the Mossad, which operates largely outside of the Middle East, also against terrorist networks and against other governments.

I heard many times that while Jim Angleton was in charge of relationships with Israel's secret services during the 1950s, 1960s and early 1970s, there was a “gentleman's agreement” that neither side would recruit agents in each other's country. It may well be that that agreement was honored during that period. But by the time I got to Israel in 1977, Jim Angleton had long since retired and the relationship between the American and the Israeli services was less close. In part, that may have stemmed from an internal CIA reorganization when the responsibility for that relationship was shifted from one man (Angleton) to a division (the Middle East). I know that throughout much of my tour in Israel, the U S was not observing any such agreement and I have no reason to believe that the Israelis were either. When Pollard was finally detected, I was not too surprised that the Israelis had made efforts to recruit Americans for their intelligence collection efforts. What did surprise me was that Pollard had not been recruited by the Mossad, but by a small separate super-secret scientific intelligence agency, which originally had been established to coordinate information on nuclear matters, primarily from the US. It operated right out of the Prime Minister's office. During my time, it was headed by an absolute jack-ass, who had previously been a Mossad agent and then was given the job of directing this scientific group. The Pollard operation was completely unprofessional, which came as a great surprise to me. It was the most unprofessional espionage case that I have encountered. It became a terrible embarrassment to our relationships. Both Peres and Rabin were embarrassed; maybe even Shamir may have been, although he does not embarrass very easily. Peres was the Prime Minister when Pollard was exposed, although the operation had started during a Likud government. I believe it was started at Sharon's instigation. Rafael Eytan, who was running this little office, was an ideological sidekick and a minor clone of Sharon. When Pollard was exposed, Sharon was still in the government, but was no longer the Defense Minister, although still very influential. The whole Pollard case

has been somewhat clouded by its handling by the American judicial system. I thought it was a dreadful stupidity on the part of the Israelis to run such a case, in light of all the support they receive from the US. They risked far more than they could ever benefit from it. They were forced, through diplomatic channels, to cooperate to some degree with the American investigation, again violating all the rules of international intelligence operations because if a government wants to recruit loyal spies, it does not then, in a crisis, cooperate with another government when it is trying to convict. That sends the wrong signal to any other agents that may be operating in foreign countries. But that did happen. But the "gentleman's agreement" to which you referred had long been abandoned.

Q: Let me now turn to Robert Kaplan's book The Arabists that was published recently. He used the word "clientitis". Did you consider that tendency a major problem?

LEWIS: I think it is a potential problem that requires continuing attention. There have been some flagrant examples. The first job of an embassy, and an ambassador particularly, especially one in a friendly country, is try to insure that the bilateral relationship between the US and the host country is as close as possible. That is done to obtain maximum cooperation when necessary. So an American diplomat is instinctively drawn to trying to find ways to improve the relationships. One way of doing that is to explain very forcefully to Washington why the host government behaves as it does. Hopefully, that prevents Washington from jumping to stupid conclusions and from acting in ways that deteriorates the relationships. In my eight years in Israel, I am sure I was accused by some of my colleagues of "clientitis". I like to believe that I was very objective at all times. But I did perceive my task not only to explain and firmly argue for US policy to Israel both publicly and privately, but also to report on Israeli policies and politics. That led me to try to explain as credibly as I could why Israeli leaders behaved as they did and how they might be best influenced. With Begin, Shamir and Sharon and other Likud leaders, that was a very tough job, because their actions were often not well received in Washington. We tried to explain why they behaved as they did and what might be done to counter it without sounding

like an advocate for their positions; that was a very difficult task. It may have led some to believe that we were suffering from “clientitis” which I do not believe was the case at all.

It is also true, however, that those officers who have served their entire careers in the Arab world and look at the Palestinian problem or the Israeli-Arab conflict arc more likely to sound like advocates for the Arab point of view, despite their best efforts at “objectivity”. They have never had the opportunity to see the world through Israeli eyes. I witnessed that syndrome over and over again in meetings and telegrams. Of course, in a sense, the US government system engenders advocacy in an adversarial system of policy making. A lot of points of view are encouraged and reflected, which ultimately, in theory at least, lets the senior policy maker choose a course which is based on “clientitist” inputs. By rigorously exchanging views and information among US posts in the Middle East through the Department's communication system to the maximum extent possible, enabled all participants to be aware of the positions of all the players and to be able to rebut or support the arguments put forward by others. That system produced, during my tour in Israel, reasonable Washington decisions, but I know that in many parts of the world, the longer an ambassador has remained at one post, the more he or she understood the problems of his host government and the less able he or she was to present the US view as vigorously as it needed to be presented when a conflict between the two governments' interests arose. That is the danger of clientitis”; you become too sympathetic with the dilemmas and problems of your host society. If you are not sympathetic, then you probably have not understood that society sufficiently. There is a good argument for not leaving people at a post for too long, but I believe the danger is often overstated.

Q: I think that point is very applicable to dictatorial situations, like Pinochet in Chile. I well remember a message from Ambassador David Popper to the Department, on which Kissinger noted that David should stop lecturing.

LEWIS: Henry was never very graceful in his comments on the work of the Foreign service, and ambassadors in particular. But it is true that every President and every

Secretary of State is reluctant to hear that his preferred policy option is not likely to be successful. If you are objective, you can try to tell the President or the Secretary that he had a brilliant idea, but that it would not be acceptable to the Israelis or the Arabs or the Chileans or the French because.... And then you list a whole host of reasons. That puts the ambassador or the senior bureaucrat in the role of an advocate suffering from “clientitis”. It is one of crosses you have to bear if you are a professional diplomat. Our job consists often of explaining to the politicians why something that on the surface seems to make so much eminent sense, in reality is an approach that will do harm than good. That is not an enviable role, but it is the job of the professional.

Dealing with brutish and nasty governments, particularly those that at certain times the US felt it necessary to court and cooperate with because of their importance to our national security, has placed many ambassadors in very awkward and tough spots. It may be that in the post Cold War era there will far fewer situations of that kind. In theory, at least, we now no longer have justifiable reason to woo the Mobutus of this world; maybe it will be easier for the US to take a greater arm's length relationships with those dictators and tyrants, unless they happen to rule the very few places where our national security considerations are so over-riding that we must over-look the essentially unacceptable behavior of those regimes. There may be some places in the Caribbean that might fit that scenario or even in the Persian Gulf. Clearly over the years, for example, we have not tried to pressure the Saudis on some of their internal practices as much as we might like to have done. That is also true perhaps for the Gulf states because oil is a vital commodity that takes precedence over other interests. We have not tried to pressure Mubarak to become a more democratic ruler because Egypt is our key ally in the Arab world.

Q: Let me ask about a process that has puzzled me for many years. I have noted that frequently there are large time gaps between the departure of one ambassador and the arrival of his successor. Why is that?

LEWIS: Ideally, there should not be a gap longer than a week. There is a diplomatic tradition that a post should never have two ambassadors present at the same time. The reason that the gap is seldomly kept to that week is essentially a function of the chaotic system we have for making ambassadorial appointments in Washington. In the first place, it takes an inordinate long time for the White House to make a decision on an ambassadorial appointment. The Department makes its recommendation and the political arm of the White House supports its candidates. Now the vetting process has become so elaborate that it takes months and months before the issue can even be presented for a decision. Then after the decision is made, the successful candidate has to fill out endless forms, which are reviewed in minute detail. Then eventually, the President makes a nomination, which is sent to the Senate, where it is subject to Committee review and hearings. Then it is reported to the Senate floor where the confirmation debate and vote takes place. Then the candidate is finally sworn in.

The odds are that none of this fits in a timely way into the departure plans of an incumbent ambassador. That means that gaps between departure and arrival occur frequently, which makes it very important for every post to have a strong career DCM who can act as Charg# d'Affaires without any disruption in the work of an embassy.

There is now a rule that an ambassador can chose his DCM and his secretary. He can influence other the assignments of other officers to his or post, but that must be done more subtly and informally. He or she has no absolute veto over those assignments nor can he overtly request a specific officer. However, I think it is true that an ambassador who cannot have a measurable influence on assignments to his or her post is a pretty poor one. I should mention parenthetically that I spent an enormous amount of my time in Tel Aviv on the phone with my Washington “network” to insure that the right people were assigned, at least to the Embassy's key positions, I probably spent more time on that issue than any other single issue. I think it was worthwhile, but it takes a lot of time and effort working the phone. Ambassadors who are political appointees are at a disadvantage in the

personnel process because they do not have the support network nor do they know the Foreign Service. If they are smart, once they arrive at post, they will join in a collaborative effort with their senior professional—the DCM. He or she will be eager to please and serve the ambassador and will render his best advice, it is in the DCM's interest as well that a post be staffed with people in which the leadership can have confidence. So the DCM will work the network with the ambassador weighing in if necessary with the seventh floor of the Department. I should also note that if an ambassador, whether a political appointee or a career officer should stick with the DCM then at post, unless advised by someone in the Department that the current incumbent is just not up to the job. The new ambassador and the old DCM will then work together for another year or two, at which time the ambassador will be sufficiently knowledgeable to handle the transition from one DCM to another. To change the two top jobs at an embassy simultaneously disrupts all relationships both within an embassy and between the embassy and host government and people. So a DCM will usually stay at a post with a new ambassador for at least three months up to a year. In the meantime, the ambassador will have had an opportunity to select a new DCM with whom he or she will be comfortable. Sometimes, ambassadors may keep their DCM for their full tour, but that is a rarer instance. When I arrived in Tel Aviv, Tom Dunnigan was the DCM. He had been the charg# for six months because Mac Toon had to leave suddenly for his assignment to Moscow in December 1976. I had known Tom for years and respected him as a good officer, but I knew myself well enough to know that he was not the kind of DCM I needed or wanted. So I warned Tom, even before I arrived, that I would be making a change. I asked him to remain during a transition period, but that then I would be requesting a new DCM. I selected Dick Viets who had been the DCM in Rumania. He stayed two years and did an outstanding job for that period. He was a brilliant political officer, with considerable knowledge of military matters. He was my close collaborator during the pre-Camp David period. He was not as good an embassy manager as I would have liked, but he was an outstanding political-diplomatic colleague and a very good alter-ego, in my absence. I think the Lewis-Viets team worked well.

Viets then was assigned to Tanzania as ambassador. He was followed by Bill Brown, whom I recruited by telephone while he was stationed in Taiwan, where he was in charge of our special office there. He had been the senior American during the very difficult period of changing from an embassy to an unofficial US mission. Bill initially felt that he had such an obligation to his staff, whose morale was very low in light of the change of status, that he was very reluctant to leave Taipei. I had never met Bill, but I had received such glowing reports about his work that I decided that he should be my DCM. I finally persuaded him over the phone that Tel Aviv was a high priority and the Department supported me; so he joined me late in 1979. He was wonderful; he was with me for three years. He had the very unusual combination of being both a Chinese and Soviet expert, having served in Moscow as well. Later he became the DAS in EA, then Ambassador to Thailand and in 1988, returned to Tel Aviv as Ambassador. Later, in 1993, he returned to Israel again for eight months to fill the gap between permanent ambassadors that we discussed earlier. It was during a crucial time in the peace process; I was the Director of the Policy Planning staff then. This temporary' “ambassadorial” assignment came as result of Warren Christopher's, the new Secretary of State, conclusion that the current Ambassador, Bill Harrop, was not the right man for the job. He had been in Tel Aviv for about one year and Christopher wanted to make a change. After several false starts, the Secretary selected Ed Djerejian who, at the time, was the Assistant Secretary for NEA. He couldn't leave that job quickly, but Christopher needed a seasoned hand in Tel Aviv because peace negotiations were at a crucial stage. So I suggested to the Secretary that Bill Brown be brought back from retirement and be sent to Israel for the interim. He had only left Israel a year earlier and therefore was still up to date with all the players. He was ideal because he could step into his old office without missing a beat. He stayed until January, 1994, when Djerejian could finally arrive at post. Unfortunately, Ed didn't stay very long. He was offered a very tempting job as Director of the new James Baker Center for Public Policy at Rice University. So he retired and left in the early summer of 1994 after spending only five months in Israel! And at the moment, the ambassadorial position in Tel Aviv is once again vacant. Jim Larocco, the DCM, is the charg# and is doing a fine job, but I think the

ambassadorial position in Tel Aviv has been treated a little cavalierly in the last few years with so much turn over and gaps. At times, the Israeli press makes some snide comments about the situation; it was quite concerned about Djerejian's brief tour, and I personally felt that Ed should never have gone to Tel Aviv with the possibility alive that he might leave suddenly after a brief stay. But such periods of upheavals occur at various posts from time to time. For example, the ambassadorial position in New Delhi was left vacant for over a year because Steve Solarz, who had been the first choice of the Clinton administration, became hung up by an investigation of some of his activities while in the Congress. It took months and months of investigation, while the post remained vacant. The Indians, as always, are highly suspicious of American motives and thought that the vacancy resulted from an anti-Indian conspiracy on part of the Clinton administration, which was not even close to the truth. Gaps of that kind occur too often for reasons that have nothing to do with policies. As I said earlier, the selection, nomination and confirmation process is just too administratively burdensome.

Q: I wanted to ask whether you ever had any dealings with the DEA when you were in Israel?

LEWIS: No, we didn't have a DEA representative in Tel Aviv. I worked with that agency closely while in Afghanistan where we were concerned about the growing of opium poppy and its major opium production capabilities. We did have drug problems in countries adjacent to Israel, but while I was there, drug traffic both internal and through the country, was not an issue. We didn't have a resident FBI agent in Israel either. Periodically, FBI people would come from Washington to deal with the Israeli authorities on specific cases.

Q: Finally, I would like to hear your comments on the American Israeli Political Action Committee (AIPAC). How influential was it during your tour as ambassador?

LEWIS: I think AIPAC has been an extraordinarily effective organization. It has grown over the years in influence and power; it is able to provide information, services and prodding

to Congressmen which is quite unique. There nothing else like it on Capitol Hill. It has been very influential in solidifying and supporting the Congressional friends of Israel. That has always been a sizeable group. I observed AIPAC changing from a Washington-based lobbying organization to a nation-wide grass roots operation, with 50,000 or more members. That generated great influence on Congressmen and Senators in their home districts; that is the chief reason why I believe AIPAC has become steadily more effective as time passed. It has gone though some internal problems. Tom Dine was forced out as director a few years ago. I thought he had done an outstanding job. AIPAC has had some difficulty adjusting to the changes in Israel governments, from the hard line Likud to a Labor government that has a different perspective on the peace process. Like many organizations, AIPAC has internal board fights, but my impression is that it is still a very effective organization. During the Bush administration, when Prime Minister Shamir was very antagonistic to the US administration, there were some major debates between the two countries. AIPAC then was a very influential voice on discussions of such things as the loan guarantees. But now the Clinton administration is on the same page as the Rabin government on practically all issues; that reduces the need for AIPAC because very few if any Israel-US disagreements reach Capitol Hill. AIPAC is also going through an interesting adjustment as it reluctantly sometime supports assistance to the Palestinians. That is not certainly part of its charter, but to support the peace process, it has had to support administration initiatives to help the PLO and the Palestinians. The new Middle East “reality” is forcing AIPAC to change its policies to some extent, but I don't think its effectiveness has declined at all.

Since this is our last session, I would like to return to some of the key substantive issues that we dealt with in 1985, and describe both the issues and my involvement in greater detail than I did in an earlier session. I've now located my notes on this period and refreshed my memory somewhat. Those last nine months were as busy as any period in my tour as Ambassador in Israel. One of reasons was that Peres was coordinating as closely as possible his strategies and tactics on all major issues with the United

States. That was in sharp contrast with his predecessors. He met face-to-face with Shultz whenever possible—three or four times during the year—, but in between Dick Murphy, then Assistant Secretary for the NEA, personally played the role of roving ambassador. You will recall that role had been previously played by a different individual, apart from the assistant secretary. So Murphy was in and out of Israel frequently, making the circle of Middle East countries, carrying messages from one to the other. But I was also very heavily involved as an intermediary between Peres and Shultz. I met almost daily with Peres; certainly at least every other day, mostly alone, sometimes in Tel Aviv, usually in his apartment there, sometimes in Jerusalem. It was not uncommon for me to go to the Prime Minister's apartment, which was not very far from my house. We would often spend sometime during a weekend together starting at 10 a.m. to 1 or 2 a.m. drinking scotch and talking about his plans, which I would then report to Shultz who in turn would send me messages to be transmitted to Peres. The core questions concerned the peace process and its relaunching and relationships with Egypt which had cooled considerably by this time but which Peres was trying to rekindle. Shultz and Peres had great respect for each other; they had known each other for sometime. From the beginning of his regime, Peres used Shultz as his advisor and confidant, either through me or directly, as I have mentioned. I thought it was a very fruitful and effective relationship.

When I was used as the communications channel, neither Peres nor Shultz wanted their exchanges recorded in telegrams that often received too much distribution in the State Department. The Department was also responsible for sending copies of our messages to other Middle East embassies and they were pretty good in both making that distribution and in not doing so, depending on the content of the message. There were of course some reporting cables, but most of my messages were directed to Charlie Hill, Shultz's executive assistant with no distribution to be made except by Charlie, if he wished to. It was a secure channel. Sometimes, when a matter was very sensitive, I would relay it to Hill over the secure phone. He in turn would brief Shultz and then call me back with the Secretary's comments. I believe that this system worked extremely well; there were no substantial

leaks, but it did put a large burden on me because I had to serve as an intermediary in addition to discharging my ambassadorial duties which were increased to some extent by the fact that I was leaving Israel in that year. So 1985 was a very, very busy year.

The peace process in 1984-85 was very murky. As I mentioned previously, Peres described his strategy to Shultz during their first meeting after becoming Prime Minister. He wanted to complete the Lebanon withdrawal, to contain the economic crisis, to warm up Israel's relationship with Egypt, partly by setting the Taba issue aside by remaining it to arbitration. Only after these matters were taken care of, would Peres turn to the peace process and negotiations with Jordan over the territories. He thought that perhaps he could even include some Palestinians in those discussions, although that was a very difficult problem for a national unity government which certainly could not deal directly with the PLO or even its public sympathizers. The relationship of the PLO to Jordan in the context of the territories was a most difficult issue. It bedeviled Israeli governments for 1985 and the following two or three years. Even Taba, which was in reality a very minor dispute, held a disproportionate importance in the Egypt-Israel relationships because of its symbolism. The Likud had blown it up into a major issue and were not prepared to give any ground on Israel's sovereignty over this small area. Shamir was vigorously opposed to formal arbitration, but ultimately the issue was settled after three years of haggling within Israel. The difficulty of settling the Taba issue was also compounded by a group of Israeli experts who were convinced they could find documentation to support Israeli claim to that small piece of land. As time passed, it became clear that the evidence was less than overwhelming, particularly when compared to what the Egyptians presented.

The relationship between Mubarak and Peres was very good; they exchanged messages. But the Egyptians would not and could not be swayed from their suspicions about Shamir. Mubarak had refused to meet him, even when he was Israeli Prime Minister. He continued to refuse to see Shamir in Cairo. Other Israeli ministers, particularly the Labor Party ones, were welcomed in Cairo. Peres found ways to meet with Osama el Baz and was in touch rather frequently with Mubarak. The snubbing of Shamir reinforced the Likud's opposition

to any concession by the Israeli government that might have resolved the Taba dispute. In our view, Mubarak's attitude toward Shamir was a mistake. We tried to persuade him that Shamir would be far less of an obstruction if he were invited to Cairo and if Mubarak would receive him. But we were never successful in our efforts. Dick Murphy was the key actor in the peace process. As I mentioned, he would travel from one capital to another trying a large variety of formulas to get the process reinvigorated. There were negotiations between Arafat and Hussein, which complicated Murphy's efforts. At various times during this period, there were formulas proposed which would have given Hussein the necessary cover to enter the negotiations. He preferred an international conference, to be co-chaired by the US and the Soviet Union—a sort of follow-on to the earlier Geneva conference. But in the mid-80s, we were not interested in letting the Soviets back into the Middle East game; it was a period of considerable East-West tension as the Cold War was coming to an end. Furthermore, the Israelis were not inclined to consider an international conference, particularly one co-chaired by the Soviets and one that involved several Arab states. After a number of failed efforts along those lines, Shultz agreed with the Israelis and took a very negative view of Hussein's proposal. Eventually, in the Spring of 1985, Peres, Mubarak, Hussein and Murphy began to seriously consider an Egyptian-sponsored meeting, which would include Jordanians and some Palestinians, who would not be screened too carefully by the Israelis for their PLO connections. It was hoped that this formulation might obtain Likud approval. The process of mounting such a meeting went on long after my departure from Israel, but never came to any positive conclusion. It went as far as making up a list of acceptable Palestinians, but the proposal was too complicated and too politically sensitive in Israel to bring it to fruition. The PLO showed remarkable restraint, for it permitted the consideration, at least, of a process in which its interests would be represented by a delegation which was not formally a PLO one and which could not publicly be acknowledged as being a PLO one. Arafat could never have acceded to a situation in which his interests would be left to the mercies of the King of Jordan. That very complex PLO-Jordan relationship made any kind of conference which would not include a formal PLO delegation very unlikely. But an enormous amount of diplomatic effort went

into this three year—1984-86—discussion of an Egyptian sponsored conference. Early in his tenure, in September 1984, Peres had formally and publicly invited Hussein to enter into direct talks. On the first of October, Hussein politely rejected that offer. This public, long distance dialogue went on for sometime with both Peres and Hussein realizing that such an approach could never accomplish much. But each had their domestic pressures to contend with, especially Peres. On December 3, Jordan and Egypt issued a joint public proposal for a UN sponsored peace conference which would have included the PLO. The conference was supposed to deal with the issues based on UN Resolution 242. Peres politely rejected that proposal; in lieu, he offered again to meet with Hussein. Peres was intent in meeting with Hussein, either publicly or privately, after a long hiatus. The two had met during secret meetings in previous years and knew each other quite well. Peres used Mitterrand, an old friend, as an intermediary. Peres always had five or six different channels going simultaneously on different issues. This was a very creative diplomatic method, but sometimes the multiple channel approach created confusion. He used send messages to the Egyptians, to Hussein, to the PLO through third parties to try to start negotiations in a way that would be politically acceptable to his coalition. One of my roles was to insure that Peres kept the US informed about all of the games he was playing. It was clear that the US was his main intermediary and that he coordinated his tactics with us. But he, like many other Israeli leaders, would have gladly found ways to avoid “big brother's” guiding hand and would have liked undoubtedly to do some things on his own. That required us to watch very carefully Peres' moves and to keep Washington fully informed of what he was doing in all channels.

The international conference idea and later, in the Spring, the joint delegation proposal consumed reams of telegrams and phone calls, but in the final analysis, neither suggestion moved the process forward. Throughout the whole period Peres had told Shultz and me that he wanted to maintain momentum in diplomatic efforts on the peace process. He didn't really expect to reach the negotiating stage for quite a while. He understood that Hussein was not ready and that his government coalition would find it exceedingly difficult

to join meaningful negotiations. But he did not want the process to cease. So he kept encouraging Murphy to keep up his efforts and continued to find opportunities to meet with Mubarak and Hussein privately. He never succeeded in those efforts during that year; it was only later on that a breakthrough was possible. These Peres efforts culminated in the London agreement with King Hussein that he reached in 1987 when he was the Foreign Minister. It was a far-reaching understanding, but unfortunately, he was then no longer Prime Minister. Shamir was offended by Peres' efforts and sabotaged the agreement.

Many of Murphy's trips concentrated on Israeli troop withdrawal from Lebanon; he shuttled several times between Beirut and Jerusalem. Rabin was the key Israeli player on this issue because he, as Defense Minister, had been put in charge of that matter by the coalition government. He of course worked closely with Peres, but Rabin was clearly the decision maker and the strategist. So we spent a lot of time with him. He was trying during the Fall of 1984 to reach agreement with Gemayel and the Lebanese government to allow Israel to withdraw in stages, turning over territory to a combination of Lebanese troops and UNIFIL. That was Rabin's way of trying to restore Lebanese sovereignty and protecting Israel's borders against terrorist operations. As usual, the Lebanese were under the psychological domination of Syria, which was not about to be in any way helpful. Murphy went to Damascus and met with Assad more than once. He always was given very hard responses indicating clearly that Syria would not give anything for Israel's withdrawal. Ultimately, Rabin was able to demonstrate to the Cabinet in early January that a Lebanon-Israel agreement was just not achievable. So on January 14, the Israelis took the unilateral decision to withdraw; Rabin had managed to break up the solid Likud opposition to unilateral withdrawal. Two or three Likud ministers, including Shamir, voted for such action. Sharon of course continued to oppose it strongly. The Cabinet agreed to begin withdrawal in three weeks and complete it within six months; it was to be done unilaterally without coordination with the Lebanese or UNIFIL. The Israelis did complete withdrawal by early June, pulling back to the Lebanese border area where they remained to work in cooperation with General Ahmad and his forces in the so called “Security Zone”.

The relationship between Peres and Shamir was very interesting in this period. Shamir was very proper in his actions as Foreign Minister. He didn't try to cause difficulties for Peres. He kept his own counsel; he just ran the Ministry. He took care of foreign policy issues that did not engage Peres; that was a considerable work load in itself. Peres was very careful to keep Shamir informed about he was doing. Undoubtedly, they agreed on some action. But Peres only briefed Shamir in a one-on-one situation in part because he did not trust the Foreign Ministry while it was headed by Shamir; he was afraid that the some of Ministry officials would have been only too delighted to leak certain information, he always cautioned us to be very careful in the use of the information he was giving us. Peres and Shamir got along quite well in that first two years of the coalition government —as well as leaders of two opposite parties could. They cooperated remarkably well on some issues, but you have to remember that Shamir was not the most conservative voice in Likud on these issues. He had competitors in the cabinet for the job of party leader; so his job was not nearly as assured as it became later. Shamir had to be very careful. He had certain blind spots; one was Egypt because of the treatment that it had and was giving him.

Our Embassy was in a very awkward position during this period and for the whole period of the coalition government. The Foreign Ministry was in the hands of one party and the Prime Ministry in the other. I made a point of meeting with Shamir alone fairly frequently. In private, he was much more likely to be forthcoming that he was in meetings with others present. I tried to keep him informed of what we were doing, separately from my dealings with Peres. The latter knew what I was doing and approved my contacts with Shamir, but I always had to be very careful not to mention certain things that Peres had told me to Shamir and vice-versa. I always had to be on guard not to violate confidences of either man. I think we managed to escape unscathed, but there were some tense moments.

I should mention some of the other issues that were active in this period. One was the Lavi aircraft project. It consumed several years of diplomacy and ultimately came to

naught. It was started by the Israelis in an effort to develop and manufacture their own advanced fighter aircraft. This was a new endeavor for them. They had built a fighter—Kafir—which was just a modified version of a French plane. But with the Lavi, the Israelis started from scratch during the tenure of Moshe Arens, as Defense Minister. He had been an aeronautical engineer and was very proud of Israel's technological base. That plane was designed to meet Israel's specific situation. It was to be capable of close ground support and of longer range runs. Arens managed, during the early Reagan administration, to sell the concept to us; we agreed to support the development efforts. That pledge was essential to launch the project because the Israelis needed to have certain advanced American technologies. Ultimately, we agreed to finance the R&D costs and for many years bore the brunt of those costs. But as we neared production time—that is, after the prototypes seemed to pass all tests—the costs of production reached astronomical levels. By the time Peres became Prime Minister, there were many in the Israeli Air Force who had opposed the project from its inception. It has essentially always been a Defense Ministry project; the Air Force wanted the best planes in the world, which were the F-15 and F-16. The Air Force just wanted more of them, rather than spend scarce resources on the development of another fighter plane, even if it was indigenous. They felt that the Lavi would not have been as good as the American planes. When Arens left the Defense Ministry at the beginning of the coalition government and was succeeded by Rabin, Israeli views began to change. Rabin had no stake in the Lavi and furthermore, the coalition government was facing an economic crisis. It soon became eminently clear that Israel could not afford the plane unless the US essentially would pay for the production costs. The Pentagon became increasingly nervous about the costs it already was incurring; it requested and got a reassessment of the US position on the Lavi. Dov Zachain, then a deputy assistant secretary of Defense, was given the task to reevaluate the whole project. He produced a very critical analysis, even though he was well known as a strong supporter of Israel. But he saw all the negatives of the project which would require massive US and Israeli support. The prototypes that were built indicated that the Lavi would have been a very fine aircraft, but the planes would have been too expensive. By the Spring, Rabin had

the whole project reassessed and finally put it on hold, with our strong encouragement. We laid out our assessment and made it clear that we could not support production to the level that would have been necessary, if any at all. Finally, the project was canceled. The Israelis believed that they could recoup some of the costs by selling it to other countries, but we had great doubts about those possibilities. The price would have been too high and the competition too great. We would have had to concur in any sale because the plane included some of our technology. The Israelis had had very poor experience with the Kafir, which they had planned to sell widely and probably could have done so, but whenever they would seek our agreement, American manufacturers, who wanted to sell in the same markets, applied pressure to the Pentagon not to agree. So I think the Kafir was only sold to a couple of Latin American countries. The Israelis understood that they would have had the same problem with the Levi. The Israelis did develop a lot of interesting and state-of-the-art technology through their developmental efforts which eventually was used to up-grade their fleet of fighter aircraft as well as including it in other weapon systems. The whole Levi matter was a major issue during this period and as long as Arens was the Defense Minister, no one could derail the effort. But when Rabin took over, he saw what would have been involved in carrying the project forward and brought it to a halt quickly.

There was another issue that really came alive during this year, although it had been debated for several years. Bill Brock was the Reagan administration's special trade representative Brock was very intrigued by the idea of “free trade zones”. He wanted to negotiate a trade agreement with Canada, which later came to fruition and subsequently turned into the North America Free Trade Association (NAFTA). But he faced skepticism and strong political opposition in Washington about trade agreements. Someone suggested to Brock that Israel and the US negotiate a free trade agreement. It might have served as a small model for any Canadian-US agreement, which was many times greater than US-Israel trade. The benefits to Israel of such an agreement would have been very great in the long run. It was hoped that all tariffs would be eliminated in ten years time, giving the US greater access to a market. Brock thought that if Congress would approve

a US-Israel trade agreement, then that might open the door to a Canada-US agreement and perhaps others as well. Israel seemed to be politically a good partner because it had many supporters in Congress who would back such an agreement. In fact, that is the scenario that was finally played out. The US and Israel negotiated over an extended period of time and eventually an agreement was reached on March 4, 1985 and signed a week later. It was a great achievement. The negotiations had been difficult; they were conducted largely in Washington. The Embassy played on the fringes. I was involved in a number of meetings with Peres and with Modai, the Finance Minister, and other Cabinet officials during the negotiations. I think the outcome has clearly benefited Israel, which enlarged its penetration of the US market. In the early years, the US exporters benefited even more. So we gained more in the period right after the signing, but in the long run, the Israelis made great gains.

Another issue that arose during 1985 was related to the Lebanon withdrawal. Israeli casualties in Lebanon continued unabated. No day went by without a story showing up about a soldier or soldiers being killed in Lebanon primarily in Shiite ambushes, while the withdrawal was going on. There were also terrorist attacks within Israel itself, launched by radical Palestinian groups and others. The casualties kept rising; there were approximately 600 young Israelis lost in the war and its aftermath, but most died after the war had formally terminated and before the withdrawal was completed. That spurred the Israeli withdrawal pace, even though no agreement was reached.

I want to mention a fascinating and moving event that occurred on March 23, 1985. The night before, I had been at Peres' house in Jerusalem, from 10:30 p.m. to 1:30 a.m. enjoying some congeniality and discussing the status of the peace process. We also discussed the renewed economic crisis. The previous two-three months had seen a fraying of the economic stabilization program. Shultz was hanging a little tough in Washington by not forwarding to Congress an economic assistance package. He used that technique, which Peres understood, to bring pressure on the Israeli Cabinet to stiffen its stabilization program. The Cabinet of course had continuing pressures from various

Ministries to ease the budgetary discipline that had been imposed. So the US assistance program was being used to assist Peres and Modai to hold the budgetary line and to reaffirm the stabilization program. As I said, our tactics had Peres' understanding and in fact, encouragement, which he could not publicly admit. So I was discussing that issue with Peres that night.

In the previous two weeks, behind the scenes but well known to me and in fact with my encouragement, negotiations had been proceeding on the Falashas, a Jewish group living in the Sudan and Ethiopia. They had lived in rural areas of Ethiopia for many centuries, cut off and isolated from other centers of Judaism. Some had been quietly evacuated from Ethiopia clandestinely by Jewish agencies and resettled in Israel. That clandestine program had been stopped because of some very unfortunate publicity which forced the Ethiopian and Sudanese governments to end it. The Falashas had been brought out of Ethiopia into the Sudan, where they were kept in a secret refugee camp. This flight was assisted by the connivance of a couple of key ministers in the Sudanese government, who knew about the transit program and did not interfere, even though the Sudan was officially bitterly hostile to Israel and therefore not able to publicly admit the use of its territory for the movement of some Jews. The unfortunate publicity had forced the termination of this program through Khartoum, although some Falashas were still arriving in Israel having followed an over-land route. Then a very secret operation was developed to bring the Falashas out by air, using US Air Force planes. The then Vice President, George Bush, assisted in the development of this secret operation while on a trip to Africa during which he got President Nimeiri's approval for the secret operation. Bush's assistance was greatly appreciated by the Israelis. Then, for the first time in history, ten or more C-130s were detailed from Germany, along with flight and ground crews, to be temporarily based in the Negev on a base that we had built for Israel after the Sinai withdrawal. The US contingent worked with the Israeli Air Force in planning and executing this secret evacuation. (Israel did not possess the necessary long-range transport aircraft needed for the long flight from Sudan.)

During my evening with Peres, he turned to me and told me that the airlift would be started the next day. He said he was flying to the Negev and asked me to join him. I gladly did and on the morning of March 23, 1985, in a misty rain, I went to the Tel Aviv airport, met Peres and a couple of others and flew to the Ramon air base in the Negev. There were a lot of other people there including the ground crews and relief pilots. The US Air Force planes, which had already taken off the night before, had to fly along the Red Sea and land at a staging area in the Sudan—a Sudanese air Force base. All the refugees had been assembled there by the Mossad and the Jewish Agency people. The plan was to complete the evacuation before it became public thereby avoiding pressures on the Sudanese government from other Arab states. I think each plane carried about 300 refugees. The plans were very interesting. A plane would land, be filled with the refugees and turn right around to take off again. It was a continuous air bridge operation. The flight took about six hours each way. We arrived in Ramon just in time for a cup of coffee and to witness the landing of the first plane. Our Embassy's Air Force Attach# had been involved in working out all the logistics. It was the first time that the US had ever operated out of an Israeli Air Force base. It was quite a sight to watch the American and Israeli Air Force officers working together; it went very smoothly, as might be expected of two very professional services. The tensions that had arisen between the two forces during the Lebanon war were completely forgotten and the evacuation operation went off without a hitch. Peres, others and I were on the tarmac with a lot of busses lined up behind us to take the refugees to absorption centers as soon as the planes had landed. I noted it was raining when we left Tel Aviv; it was still misting when we were in the Negev. The first plane landed and taxied to where we were standing. The large tail gate opened, showing the cavernous nature of a C-130. It is a huge plane. We walked up the ramp in the rear and entered the plane to greet the first Falashas. It was a very emotional moment for me and I am sure for Peres. Here were Jews whose culture went back for centuries, dressed in thin cotton clothing, suddenly uprooted from a familiar environment and deposited in a totally strange place in the middle of Israel. Many did not know where they were going; they were not informed until they had gotten on the plane. They all were anxious to come

to Israel, but really not many comprehended the enormity of the change they were going to face. They only spoke Amharic. They had some religious leaders with them, clothed in white robes. Peres made a brief welcoming speech in Hebrew, which was translated for them. Then they filed off the plane. Every other refugee would kneel down and kiss the ground. It was so moving to see the Falashas' reactions as they arrived in the Promised Land. There were many orphans, single women, older people, families. All were dazed and cold because of the rain. They had never flown before and I understand that the flight had been somewhat rough. But they were very disciplined and despite all the novelty and the tribulations, the process moved very smoothly. There were several young women soldiers accompanying each bus. As the refugees boarded the busses, they were given some food and drink, while being taken to the absorption centers. We stayed to watch the arrival of two planes and then returned to Tel Aviv. The whole experience was a tangible episode which epitomized the religious fervor that the Falashas brought with them. Their embrace of their “motherland” was a sight that I don't think I will ever see again. It was personally very satisfying because of the role of the US Air Force.

The Falasha then ran into a lot of trouble from the Orthodox rabbis, who refused to accept the fact that they were totally kosher! They had been separated from the rest of Jewry for thousands of years. They only had the first five books of the Old Testament—the Torah. They followed that very strictly. They also observed very strictly the old Talmudic dietary practices. They had their own priests. In fact, the Falashas practiced, in a very disciplined way, an antique version of Judaism. But they didn't have the Talmud—the rabbinical writings which interpreted the Old Testament. So the Orthodox Rabbis said that the Falashas had to be reconverted. That of course was a major insult to people who had kept their Jewishness for a very long time, despite major opposition. The Rabbis' edicts led to a lot of battles—they wouldn't allow them to marry unless they reconverted. Then I believe that there arose a certain amount of discrimination based on skin color. The Falashas were very black; they stood out in Israel. So they had to jump a lot of hurdles as they resettled. They have had some remarkable success stories. By now, I think we

can deem the Falasha immigration as a very successful absorption story. They have performed well in the military. The younger ones in particular have adjusted well. The older have had difficulties and probably will never be fully comfortable in their new surroundings. That is not unusual in immigration waves. But the younger ones have been absorbed in Israeli society and have become increasingly successful. We should note that the arrivals that I witnessed was only one of a series of exodus, which continued for many years, directly from Ethiopia with the agreement or connivance of the Mengistu government. The operation I witnessed was called “Operation Moses”. It brought out 7-9,000. More had been expected, but when the actual numbers were totaled, they were not as many as had been anticipated. In any case, l was very moved by what I witnessed; it was an exciting day.

I now would like to discuss terrorism, which was a problem during the time period we are now spanning. That issue was closely related to the question of prisoners' exchange. In the course of the Lebanon war and its aftermath, some Israeli soldiers had been captured. For example, three had fallen asleep and had been caught; they were supposed to be guarding a post. They were caught by a radical Palestinian group. Israelis are extraordinarily sensitive to making sure that all of their troops are brought home after wars, dead or alive, no matter how long it takes. So a long period of negotiations began which ultimately led to what many people feel was a disastrous decision. In April, 1985, the government exchanged 1150 hard core terrorists, who had had been imprisoned over the years after having received long sentences for their activities on Israel soil, for these three soldiers. It was an agonizing decision, because all understood that one ransom payment would only lead to the next attempt and one after that. The government tried to resist the blackmail, but the pressure of families of the soldiers became so great, along with the increasing sympathy of the families of other soldiers, that Peres and Rabin didn't think they finally had any choice. They were being picketed and lobbied constantly. That combined with that sense of responsibility for the troops ultimately wore them down. Eventually, that trade cost the Israelis dearly as other prisoner exchanges were negotiated later on. Some

of the released prisoners, who had been exchanged with the understanding that they would never engage in hostile acts again, after having resettled in their old Israeli villages, participated in additional terrorist activities. So that prisoner exchange was the target of very serious criticisms both when it was negotiated and subsequently. The US had nothing to do with it. Since the agreement was negotiated by a coalition government, it could not become a major political issue since both parties had participated.

There was another interesting aspect of this period. As I have said, Peres and I were friends and saw each other frequently during the coalition government era. He was communicating to Shultz through me on a lot of extremely sensitive issues. We also discussed privately on many occasions Israeli politics, which were always very interesting and lively. In public, I tried my best to maintain an aloof position on political matters. Nonetheless, Peres knew that I was very sympathetic to the Labor Party, which I am sure didn't come as any great surprise to him, since its policies on the peace process were very close to ours. I had, of course, worked with the Likud leaders for many years and had always been extremely careful in public to avoid commenting on Israeli politics. On April 17, I met with Peres in Jerusalem together with Nimrod Novik, who was the Prime Minister's personal advisor and frequent secret foreign affairs emissary, Dick Murphy and Jock Covey, one of his assistants. The meeting went on for a time while we discussed Murphy's most recent trip to Damascus and Assad's attitude. He also described the meeting he had had the previous evening with a number of Palestinians in Jerusalem and commented on the Egyptian-Israeli relationships and what might be done to improve them. Then we moved to the topic of Israeli politics. Perce said that his next comments had to be entirely off-the-record because not all of his views were known to Rabin, and certainly not to Shamir. He said that he had told the Labor Party caucus the previous day that he was acting as Prime Minister in the interest of Israel and not the Labor Party. He told the caucus that he would make his decisions on that premise. He said that he thought that the Likud had to be part of the coalition for as long as possible because the country was at a critical juncture which demanded that decisions be supported by a broad spectrum.

The Likud had ultimately agreed to the Lebanon policy and the economic stabilization policy. But Peres noted that he didn't know how long that cooperation would continue. He said that there was a lot of pressure on him from within Labor because the country seemed pleased by his government's policies and now held Labor in high regard. So some of his Labor colleagues were giving serious consideration to breaking up the coalition and moving to early elections in order to be able to form a single party government. Peres said that he was resisting this current, in part because one could never be sure about the outcome of elections and in part because he thought it was necessary to have the Likud share the onus of the hard decisions that had to be taken. He went on to say that he wanted to get Israel into negotiations with the Palestinians and the Jordanians. He recognized that coalition might break up if progress were made in those negotiations. But he believed that the preferable course was to maintain the coalition, at least until the negotiations were well launched. He noted that Jordan was not prepared now to enter negotiations. He also thought that it would not be possible to marshal enough Israeli public support for negotiations with other Arabs until the Egypt-Israel climate was improved. That suggested to him that the peace process had to be maintained, but he didn't expect any major break-throughs for the foreseeable future.

That discussion was one example of the strategic coordination we were able to muster during Peres' tenure as Prime Minister. We knew what his strategy was and then we could work with him, closely but privately. I do not believe that prior to the Clinton Administration there has been a period when the two governments shared views and strategy as closely as during that first year of Peres' tenure. Today, the cooperation is also very close, but I don't believe that Rabin shares his views of domestic Israeli politics with the American Ambassador or any American official.

Another example of this close working relationship arose during a December 17 meeting. Dick Murphy had just returned from a trip to Amman where he had held a long conversation with King Hussein. He told me and my DCM, Bob Flaten, that he had come to understand that it was by then possible for the King and Peres to exchange personal

communications through an old and private link. That link had been active before 1977 but had atrophied during the Begin-Shamir periods. Hussein had told Murphy that his technical expert had met with his Israeli counterpart. They had been able to overcome some technical problems in the communications link and that in fact, he had been exchanging some messages with Peres already. But the King noted that references to this exchange had surfaced in the Israeli press which had also engaged in what he, Hussein, considered character assassination. That convinced him that he could not afford to continue exchanges in that channel. He did not ask Murphy to pass this information on to Peres, but by having explained the problem, he undoubtedly thought that the word would be passed to the Israeli Prime Minister. Murphy suggested that I mention this issue to Peres very quietly at an appropriate moment so that he would understand why the channel had gone dead, which I later did. This episode was just one example of the relationship that in fact had existed and continued to exist between Hussein and the Labor Party leadership. It would have been a far better one if Israeli leaks had not occurred; they increased the fears at both ends of the communications link, although for many years before 1977 it had been very secure. But after Begin took office and even into Shamir's early period, the link was not as secure; it was only late in the 1980's and early 1990s that it became secure again. The U.S. had provided a link in that secure communication channel and had earlier acted as intermediary between the King and the Israeli Prime Minister, although we were not the entire linkage. At earlier times, the channel worked through the CIA Station Chief in Amman; the Agency was the actual secure transmission belt. At a certain point, understandably, the Israelis and probably Hussein himself became uncomfortable in using US government facilities for sensitive communications between the leaders of two sovereign countries since we were thereby completely familiar with the discussions going on between the two sides. So they had established their own direct link. By 1984-85 our monopoly had been terminated and we provided a transmission belt occasionally.

George Shultz was in Israel about three times in the winter of 1984-5. On one of his trips, he was accompanied by Dick Murphy. Murphy returned to Jerusalem after Shultz had finished his tour of the region; he had just been in Amman once again. During this trip, he conveyed to Peres Hussein's deep unhappiness about the famous “sand bar” question, which was another of those issues that we were asked to become involved in periodically. The Yarmuk River is one of the Jordan River's tributaries; it runs mostly between Syria and Jordan, but passes through a little corner of Northeast Israel. It is the only river that is really uncontrolled in the whole region resulting in a major waste of its waters. For years, the construction of a large dam had been on the drawing boards, which we would finance. But the Israelis objected to the construction of the dam unless a satisfactory water distribution plan had been approved a priori. Those negotiations never resulted in an agreement. So no dam was ever built, but the river does contain a sand bar, which crosses the river and seemed to have been built more or less by Mother Nature. The Jordanians had built a diversion weir, which directed part of the water into their canal on the east bank. The sand bar, during the course of a year, builds up so high that it forces all the water to run away from Jordan's weir and canal. The Jordanians used to periodically dredge out the sand bar, daring in a sense the Israelis to stop them. That led to some shooting and certainly a considerable amount of anxiety. We intervened on a number of occasions during the 1970s and the 1980s to calm things down. We would convene a meeting of technical specialists, trying to find some permanent solution to the problem so that the threat of war could be avoided. As usual, in this period, the sand bar had once again built up, depriving the Jordanians of their water. We had been unable to persuade the Israelis to be accommodating; they were being very uncooperative even in the technical meetings. They were trying to force the Jordanians to hold more formal negotiations as a prelude to broader peace talks and to deal with the problem of the weir once and for all. Hussein complained rather bitterly about the Israeli attitude to Murphy. In light of our efforts to have His Majesty to join peace negotiations, Murphy and I had, on a number of occasions, tried to get Peres and Rabin to soften their stand on the sand bar and to allow the Jordanians to dredge the river and permit the flow of water into Jordan,

which was chronically very short of water everywhere. We viewed such Israeli action as a “confidence building” measure. Finally, in a meeting in early November, 1984 Shultz raised the issue on our recommendation. Peres agreed to review the situation; the technical people opposed the idea, the Foreign and Defense Ministries thought that Israel should stick to its position. Peres did essentially over-rule his bureaucracies and the Jordanians were permitted to clean the sand bar. The issue was trivial, but it forced us to invest a tremendous amount of diplomatic effort to keep Jordan-Israel relations from deteriorating, even if we had to work surreptitiously. The same comment may be made about Lebanon-Israel relations, which also require enormous US effort and time.

During late 1984, we had to go through a threat to the Embassy. One of the true pleasures of serving in Israel, as contrasted to being stationed in many other countries, was that security was excellent both for Israelis and for foreign diplomats. I didn't have any bodyguards; I could travel freely, even by myself. I could walk around towns unescorted. On a few occasions, in the course of my eight years, we were alerted by intelligence agencies that a threat was being planned. Then we would take special precautions. The only time that I am aware of that the Chancery was targeted was in December, 1984. Through our own intelligence, we found out that the Israeli police had picked up six Gaza Arabs who had plotted to attack the Chancery. They had hoped to kill as many people as possible. The stops' was somewhat curious because these six individuals did not appear to be part of an organized terrorist cell. They were just unemployed, misguided Gazans; one night, while sitting around bitterly reflecting on their plight, they decided that they should make a statement about their condition. Fortunately, they were intercepted by the Israeli police bringing their plot to a rapid end. The only other time that I had any real sense of apprehension was after Camp David when we picked up some reliable intelligence that a group of Jewish religious extremists—a Meir Kahane-like group—who were so upset by the American role in forcing Israel to surrender to Sinai that they decided to try to assassinate me as a symbol of theirdispleasure. So for about two months, I had a Shin Beth special executive protection detail assigned to me. The Jewish cell

was eventually broken up and no attempt was ever made on my life. Except for those two instances, it was remarkable that we were not threatened, despite the almost weekly terrorist attacks that took place in Israel, on going armed conflicts and essentially an open society. To feel threatened only twice in eight years, under such circumstances, I believe was truly remarkable. That would certainly not have been the case in many other countries as evidence by the several US ambassadors who have been assassinated in that region, not to mention the many anti-US riots and attacks on American diplomats. We did have some anti-American demonstrations, all of which were completely peaceful. But the secure atmosphere that one felt in Israel made the tour for Americans so much more pleasant; we learned to appreciate the warmth and friendliness of the Israelis even when they disagreed with American policy. The freedom to enjoy the streets, beaches and sights of the country unfettered by security concerns was a real bonus for serving in Israel for all Americans.

After eight years in any country, you are bound to face the same issues at least twice and usually more. But working with Peres was a new factor that made my last two years of service still very interesting and challenging. As we neared the end, starting in April, there were an unending series of farewells, ceremonies, awards, honorary degrees, forests commemorating my tour. By the first week of June, both Sallie and I were worn out and were ready to leave. We took off for a two-week diving trip, starting in the Sinai and then the Red Sea; that helped us to unwind. In the last six weeks, I gave dozens of media interviews. As I look at them now in retrospect, they tended to be more reflections in answers to questions such as “What is it like to be an Ambassador? What were the high points of your tour?”. There were some questions on current events and I am sure my responses reflected the tortuous period that mid-1985 turned out to be. The Israelis were just then completing their Lebanon withdrawal, but assassinations of Israeli soldiers continued. The economic crisis had returned with a vengeance, requiring Peres' full attention, particularly the need to rebuild a package arrangement with labor, which was essential if inflation were to be controlled. I was personally very fortunate because just about three days after having left my office on May 31 (which I vacated a couple of

weeks before my departure from the country), there was a dramatic high jacking of a TWA jet plane in Beirut. That of course produced a considerable crisis, but I was no longer ambassador and therefore did not become involved. We left Israel late in June and returned to our house in McLean. I was ambivalent about retiring in the Washington area. We might have moved out of the area except that I entered into a contractual arrangement with Simon and Schuster to write a book about the role of a mediator in a peace process. My agent was Alice Mahew. To write the book, I needed to be close to my papers and have access to my files in the State Department. Once we had finally unpacked, there was no way we would move out of the area. Furthermore, all of our friends lived here and we liked Washington very much.

I tried to stay “retired” for a couple of years. I was giving a lot of speeches around the country, which paid the mortgage. I was appointed as an International Fellow at the Dayan Center of the Tel Aviv University. I planned to spend several months there, working on my book in part, living in the Tel Aviv area as a private citizen. I did return to Israel for the first time in November, which was a little bit too soon. But I went back then because the Weizmann Institute of Science was giving me an honorary degree. It was a big ceremony. The Pickerings, Tom and his wife Alice, who had replaced us, were very gracious, but it was clear that Alice particularly would be much happier if we were not around. I did return on a couple of occasions in 1986 for very brief periods. Later, we spent considerable time traveling around and ended up in Israel again in early summer, 1987. That Spring, some friends and I scuba-dived off the coast of New Guinea, after having visited New Zealand and Australia. When we returned via Israel, we rented an apartment in Jerusalem for six weeks. That was our first opportunity to actually live in Jerusalem; our first chance to really become acquainted with that marvelous city, unencumbered by any official status. We were really looking forward to the experience. I should note that the book was not progressing very rapidly. I became involved in a hassle with the publishers, whose views of the book were gradually revealed to be quite different than mine. They were interested in a “kiss and tell” memoir, which would comment on a lot of people who were still alive

and our friends. That I was not prepared to do. But I was getting impatient about finishing the book and I continued to work on it. One day, I had an unexpected phone call from Chicago, asking whether I would be interested in talking to someone. I was not in the job market; I was happy to travel around and enjoy my free time. I did have some pangs of guilt because by then I was only 56 and perhaps too young to retire. But it was certainly not an overwhelming feeling. In any case, I followed up on the phone call and returned to the US to talk to members of the Board of Directors of the United State Institute of Peace, an organization that I had barely heard of. Ultimately, I ended up accepting the position of President and Chief Executive Officer of that autonomous organization, established and funded by the US Congress.

The Institute at the time was just a year old. I spent the next five years there, building it up from a dozen staffers to about 75. We raised the annual budget from $2 million to about $12—a level that it has maintained to date. I had a lot of fun at the Institute, running my own independent agency, unfettered by a large bureaucracy such as State Department. I feel quite good about what we achieved. It is now an increasingly active and respected institution. It gave me an opportunity to meet many leaders around the world. I became very involved in the conflict resolution field, since that was the basic focus of the Peace Institute. We promoted conflict resolution, mediation, negotiations. We funded some serious research into the origins of conflict and available methods to contain and halt wars. In the course of those five years, I was widely introduced to the many dimensions of the academic and foundation worlds with which I had not dealt before. I met a lot of very dedicated people, all of whom were dedicated to the achievement or maintenance of peace. The Board of Directors were very conservative and hard headed —all Reagan appointees, even though the Board was split evenly between Democrats and Republicans. But all were conservative and skeptical of peace movements. So we always had interesting tensions in working with that Board, while at the same time trying to maintain the support of much more liberal private persons and groups who had lobbied Congress to set up the institution in the first place. These private groups had a different

view of the world from that of our Board, but somehow we managed to accommodate the disparate variety of interests and I think we sponsored a balanced program. We had a few strong supporters in Congress who helped us a lot. Most of Congress didn't really have a clue about the Institute, but it relied on the voices that spoke up on our behalf. I refer to people like Senator Mark Hatfield from Oregon and Senator Jennings Randolph of West Virginia, who after leaving the Senate remained as an advisor as long as he was able to. For the thirty years that he had been in Congress, he championed the cause of a US Peace Academy, run along the lines of West Point. Its main goal would be to teach the skills of peace. Ultimately, the Senate passed the enabling legislation as a favor to Randolph in his last year in the Senate. He was a loved and highly respected member of the Senate. The enabling legislation was only approved by the Senate in 1984. In fact, Howard Baker, then the Majority Leader, refused to schedule a vote on the legislation until Hatfield threatened to attach the legislation as an amendment to the Defense Authorization Act, which was on the floor at the time. Baker balked, but since the Senate does not have a “germaness rule” as the House has, Hatfield could do that. And that is what Hatfield did. So the Institute's enabling legislation was actually adopted as an amendment to the Defense Authorization Act. It had a separate title, but I think the symbolism is quite appropriate. The House had held no hearings on the Institute and had never voted on the issue. That left the future of the Institute in the hands of a conference committee, where the Senate members convinced the House delegates to go along with the Senate version. That is how the Institute of Peace was born. It was done over the opposition of the Reagan administration and particularly that of the State Department, which after Congressional approval, tried to torpedo the concept. The Reagan White House refused to appoint a Board, as required to do under the law. Months and months passed while State and OMB conspired in an effort to pass another law that would have gutted the original concept. Fortunately, there were not enough Senators who were interested in turning the clock back. Eventually, the pressure from public groups won out and Reagan appointed a Board which had belatedly began to operate only in the Spring of 1986. I had a truly fascinating five years, but I think five years was just about enough.

Then, suddenly, without warning, just a few days before Clinton's inauguration in 1993, I received a call from Warren Christopher, the Secretary of State designee whom I had known (though not well) in the Carter years when he was Vance's deputy. He told me that he knew that I was not interested in a job in the administration. (I had said that to a number of people who had asked me, even though I had briefed Clinton personally on Middle East issues. I was happy that he was elected, but I was not interested in returning to the government.) But Christopher asked whether I would be willing to come to see him the next morning—Saturday—to talk to him. I agreed, and at that meeting he asked me to rejoin the Department as Director of the Policy Planning staff. That was the only position in the Department that tempted me. I had been Deputy Director to Winston Lord earlier during the Ford administration and I thought I knew how to manage that staff. The Planning staff I had been a part of was very successful under the leadership of Lord and Secretary Henry Kissinger. I was intrigued by the challenge of that job. I asked Christopher a number of questions, particularly about the kind of Policy Planning staff he had in mind. I liked all the people that he had assembled for his team, such as Peter Tarnoff and Tony Lake. I knew them from previous association in the Carter administration, and I knew Les Aspin quite well. So I liked the whole national security group. I outlined to Christopher how I expected to manage the staff and approach my role.

Christopher told me that that sounded exactly right. He thought it was perfect and suggested that I talk to Peter Tarnoff, the putative Under Secretary for Political Affairs to arrange the details. He added that he had already talked to the President(!) who had expressed delight that I would be joining the Administration. The Secretary said that he would like to announce my appointment along with several others on the following day. That required me to make a final decision that day. So I went to talk to Tarnoff and asked him what I believed were the right questions, but probably not all that I should have. The answers were very reassuring; he satisfied me on my questions about my role, my access to Christopher, my freedom to recruit top-flight new talent, and other matters that were

important to me. I discussed the Secretary's offer with Sallie and the next day I called and accepted.

Later it became clear that I had not asked Christopher enough questions. I had not talked to people who had worked closely with Christopher in the past. I essentially accepted the offer because I felt that I had an obligation to serve a President whom I had strongly supported and whom both Sallie and I wanted to be successful. If I had turned it down, I would probably have regretted it later.

That was the beginning of my last year of service in the U.S. government. I stayed for exactly one year, when I re-retired. It was a long year, both for the Clinton Administration and for me.

Within a few days on the job I realized what a chaotic situation I had plunged into. The new President and his close advisors were totally preoccupied with his domestic agenda—on which he had been elected. When forced by events to cope with foreign policy, the White House conducted endless bull-sessions which seemed never to produce decisions, until political pressures made some decision unavoidable. On the 7th Floor, I found an odd, newly established organizational structure with multiple Under Secretaries supposedly to act as a “Management team”, which had the effect of downgrading and neutering the traditional key policy-making players—the regional Assistant Secretaries, who were no longer even included in the Secretary's morning staff meetings! I was them, but I felt rather like Rip Van Winkle—as I thought back to sitting in Dean Rusk's morning meetings (with my boss, Chet Bowles) while Assistant Secretaries like Averill Harriman or Soapy Williams discussed and obtained hard guidance about how they should deal with their regions of the world.

And Christopher was enigmatic. He was highly disciplined, kept to his impossible daily schedule, read his briefing books, listened impatiently to arguments among the senior staff, then adjourned meetings with a few cryptic words intended to have someone else

hammer out a consensus on the issue and bring it to him for approval. For a few weeks he seemed to appreciate having my historical perspective on many of the organizational and bureaucratic challenges the new team faced. He obviously valued my advice on Arab-Israeli issues, and I played a key role for 6-8 months in the senior Middle East policy team (with Martin Indyk at the NSC, Ed Djerejian in NEA, and Dennis Ross—(held over from the Baker era). Chris always treated me with utmost courtesy and personal consideration—but somehow, as a Policy Planner, I didn't click with him.

I hired or recruited a splendid staff, keeping on the cream of S/P members who had served under Dennis Ross and adding some real talents, like my old Latin America colleague from S/P in 1974-75, Luigi Einaudi, just then leaving his post as our Ambassador to the OAS. Luigi was without doubt the best expert on Latin America around. And I brought in Hans Binnendijk from Georgetown as my Principal Deputy—an inspired choice. We laid out imaginative ways to reexamine the medium and long term issues for the new Administration, sought close collaboration with the regional bureaus, set up a new “early warning system” for impending crisis, began disseminating very thoughtful papers on the priority issues, and tried without much success to engage Christopher in discussion of his broader options. It just didn't take.

Chris is a typical corporate lawyer. Bring him problems one after another and let him find the most efficient operational approach for dealing with them. He is relatively uninterested in ideas or broad policy issues, prefers to wrestle not with the “what?” but rather with the “how” questions in foreign affairs. And he's allergic to vigorous, exuberant arguments over policy issues. I broke crockery more than once in morning staff meetings by raising uncomfortable or divisive questions. Some of the staff wanted to pursue them: Chris always wanted to move on as quickly as possible. Only with his key advisor, Tom Donilon was he ever really at ease enough to debate the unthinkable. I couldn't penetrate his small in-group, so slowly I realized that, except on Arab-Israel matters where Aaron Miller and I were full players, our staff wouldn't have the impact it was capable of making. The

effectiveness of a Policy Planning Staff in any Administration rests almost completely on the personal relationship the Director demonstrably has with the Secretary.

For example, we had very strong expertise on Yugoslavia in S/P, but I couldn't persuade Christopher to let us into the highly compartmentalized decision process he used on the issue—and we were reduced to wise but ultimately ineffective “kibitzing”. And the Administration's Bosnia disasters needed help!! Nor were S/P's talented experts on Russia able to make much impact on Strobe Talbott's compartmentalized Russian policy operation.

After accompanying Christopher on his first Middle East trip, I concluded that I would probably be more effective not going along on all his overseas trips but rather trying to run a productive planning operation in Washington. My successor, Jim Steinberg, thirty years younger, very bright and a fast pen on speeches and public statements, has wisely decided to go the other direction and has worked himself into a role as another Special Assistant on all trips, part of the small inner circle with Tom Donilon. He apparently fits Chris's style; I didn't.

By June, I already knew it wasn't working well; however, it was a motor scooter accident in Bermuda that month (on our 40th wedding anniversary) that laid me up after an emergency spleen removal for seven weeks that undoubtedly put paid to my return to the Department. By the time I got back to work in late August, somewhat slowed down at first, S/P was clearly on the margin, much to the frustration of Hans and our other fine staffers. And by my 63rd birthday (Oct. 1), I was fed up with working 16 hour days with so little positive impact on the Clinton Administration's manifold foreign policy problems. Our Arab-Israel policy was about the only bright spot. I now felt comfortable leaving that in Dennis Ross's hands.

Early in October I sat down with Chris and said that despite my repeated efforts, and those made for me by Marc Grossman, Executive Secretary of the Department, to get him to

define better what exactly he really he wanted from S/P, we continued to fly essentially blind. So I thought that he might be better served by having someone else in my position. I had therefore decided to retire for a second time shortly after January 1—giving him plenty of time to find a replacement who might mesh more easily with his style. He was very gracious, but he didn't argue.Nonetheless, weeks went by without any action on my successor. My staff began to lose morale and drive; the word got around, so I told them frankly about my decision and the reasons for it. But by that time I finally despaired of his ever making a decision and left office with the future of S/P unresolved—Feb. 1—(one year after my return to State)—the staff so laboriously recruited had already begun to unravel and find other jobs. That was the part I regretted the most, for I never worked with a finer crew, and I feel I let them down. But when it doesn't work, it just doesn't work.

So my final stint in government ended on a sour note. After enjoying my close collaborations with many Secretaries of State, especially Cy Vance, Al Haig, Ed Muskie, and George Shultz, failing to connect with Warren Christopher was, of course, sad—perhaps for both of us. But what I regret more is that I was ultimately unable to help strengthen Bill Clinton's foreign policy very much—in a tumultuous year when he needed a great deal of help. What our memos and arguments tried often to urge on Christopher: the need to combine diplomacy with perceived strength to back it up—wasn't a welcome message early in the Clinton Administration. But, fortunately, events and experience have now brought the lesson home, and by 1996, Clinton's foreign policy team is far steadier and wiser. I hope he has another term in office to show how much he has learned.**********

Ambassador Samuel W. Lewis' Speech at the Dayan Center, Tel Aviv University October 30, 1984

Thank you very much Itamar, it is a pleasure indeed to be at the Dayan Center. Moshe Dayan was not only a great statesman and a great hero of this country but also a close

friend of mine and that fact has been one of the many things that has enriched the seven and a half years that my wife and I have been privileged to be in Israel.

I want to start with a disclaimer. This is not a speech and not a lecture. It is a series of personal musings about the subject. And it is most emphatically not a statement on behalf of the United States Government. I wouldn't want my government, my president, my friends in Washington to catch any flack from any other government or from ex-administrations for anything that I say this afternoon. I'm here as a seeker after the truth in an effort to give you a personal impression of some of the factors that went into the stalemate that occurred after Camp David in the peace process and unfortunately persists to this present time.

I unfortunately couldn't make the morning session. I've been trying to find out from Elie Rubenstein and others what was said. And you'll have to forgive me if I say something that they've already said. I don't want to rehearse the history and I'm not going to talk much about Camp David itself, though being there was a central experience in my life. I'd like rather to concentrate on what's happened since Camp David and why the promise of the second part of the Camp David agreement dealing with the settlement over the West Bank and Gaza has not prospered.

There really are three separate periods you have to look at though and inevitably we have to mention from time to time a few events in those periods which hinged on the stalemate and ultimately overcame the best efforts of a lot of very dedicated people from all three countries. The first period from 1979 to the end of 1980 was the period of great opportunity, unfortunately, missed opportunity. The period from 1981, the Reagan administration, until the beginning of the Lebanon war was a period in which there were some possibilities of renewing a process which had come close to stalling already and some false dawn. The period since the beginning of the Lebanon war has been a period of really total stalemate with certain events, particularly the launching of President Reagan's initiative of September 1, 1982, adding a certain amount of excitement and turmoil to the

diplomatic landscape but not producing movement. Most of the period that is really of interest to me in this afternoon session is the first period.

Beginning with the end of the negotiations for the peace treaty and the signing of that peace treaty in March of 1979 up until the end of the Carter administration, that moment of signing that peace treaty was a period of high hopes and expectations. Certainly the atmosphere that surrounded the treaty signing in Washington was extraordinary. And even here, although it was a bit outweighed, as I recall by the importance of Maccabee's winning the European cup, it still produced quite a bit of excitement. For the period beginning in May of '79 until the end of '80, delegations from the three countries met, adjourned, remet, readjourned, exchanged thousands and thousands and thousands of words of documents of ideas, drafted position papers, ate enormous quantities of food (much to the ill benefit of most of the participants), traveled back and forth between Egypt and Israel and sometimes Europe; and at the end of the Carter administration, Sol Linowitz, who was then our chief negotiator, submitted a very scholarly, lengthy report to President Carter just before he left office on why it had not yet succeeded and what should be done to enable it to succeed in the future. Some of the points that Sol made, I think, in retrospect will stand up rather well historically. But I'm not going to quote him, I'm going to give you my impressions.

There were a whole lot of elements that conspired against success. When the autonomy talks, as they were called, began in May of 1979 at Beersheba with Secretary Vance present during the visit of Anwar Sadat to Beersheba, there was a moment when it seemed that all three delegations believed that these negotiations could be carried out in rather short order. One of the most difficult negotiations around the period of the signing of the peace treaty had to do with the famous joint letter which established the framework for the autonomy talks. That joint negotiated letter from Prime Minister Begin and President Sadat to President Carter dated the 26th of March, the same date as the peace treaty said, inter alia, that the two governments agree to negotiate continuously and in good faith to conclude these negotiations at the earliest possible date and they agreed that

the objective is establishment of the self-governing authority in West Bank and Gaza to provide full autonomy to the inhabitants. Egypt and Israel set for themselves the goal of completing the negotiations within one year, and so forth.

That letter as I say, was a tortuous negotiating exercise and ended up basically just restating language from the Camp David agreement. But two of the points became very controversial as time went on because rather than continuous negotiations which were visualized, negotiations were quite episodic. And each government for its own reasons found it necessary after two or three days of convening of delegations to go back home, report to the political bosses, take stock, leak their own versions of what had happened to the press, build political barriers against attacks from local oppositions and lick their wounds.

And then the United States role for the ensuing month or two would generally be to try to find a place to have the next discussion and if possible assist in reaching an agreement on the agenda. It was a totally different negotiating environment, therefore, from the Camp David environment which was described I'm sure this morning: an environment in which about thirty people were locked up literally for thirteen days and nights until they came to agreement and in which there was no contact permitted with the media except through one official spokesman for the conference. That difference in the physical circumstances was I think a factor which led ultimately to the failure to these negotiations. But surely it was only one of many.

At the heart of the problem of this period and indeed perhaps a problem which continues up to the present time was the fact that there was a mutual misperception in the Israeli government and in the Egyptian government. Once again I have to say that this is my personal perception. No one else should be blamed for it. A mutual misperception of the true priority goals of the other side. And this is something which has commented on from time to time here in Israel and in the various memoirs of those who have written already about the period. And it came of course to a head shortly after Camp David.

The Camp David accord itself was the high water mark of bridging between these different priorities. The agreement if you look at it is a mixture. Part of it is a framework for a treaty with Egypt pure and simple. Part of it is a framework of what is close to being a comprehensive approach toward a long term settlement of the Palestinian problem. Though that work comprehensive doesn't appear in the document.

Now my Israeli friends at Camp David and certainly more in the months thereafter, and well into 1980 or '81; I believe that it's fair to say that most of the Israeli statesmen involved in this exercise were convinced that the portion of the Camp David agreement which dealt with the Palestinian problem was of much less importance to Egypt than the treaty. And then, in fact, many would have said and did say it was merely a cosmetic icing put on the cake of the peace treaty to permit a certain amount of diplomatic rationalization to be made to the Arab world by President Sadat. And one could cite lots of evidence as to why Sadat was not enormously worried personally about the Palestinians.

President Carter, as a matter of fact, in a session in which I was present, made a remark to some of us that after a particularly frustrating discussion of the Palestinian part of the Camp David agreement, said I really don't think that anybody worries at all about the Palestinians except me. And that remark replied both to Sadat and to Begin. And I'm sure it was an exaggeration, but it was the way Carter felt at that moment. Through the period of negotiations before Camp David, during and after, this question of whether Egypt really just wanted its territory back and peace, and the rest of it was what it had to do as a minimum to avoid being attacked too much by other Arab countries bedeviled, I think, the negotiations.

And then on to the other side, there was undoubtedly in Cairo in that period a perception of some confusion about the Israeli priorities. It was clear to the Egyptians that Israel wanted peace - no question about that - and was willing to concede a lot of territory for peace and eventually ceded all of the Sinai for it. There were many Israelis saying that there was a genuine desire to find a new formula for the West Bank and Gaza which could ultimately

lead to a permanent settlement. There were others in Egypt who perceived the talk about the West Bank and Gaza and what Israel was prepared to concede on those territories as window dressing - the necessary window dressing to get the Egyptians to agree to the peace treaty. So there was, I think, a mutual misperception on both sides, not wholly resolved to this day.

The second factor which certainly influenced the stalemate was domestic politics. Here, I think the problem was more in Israel that in Egypt, though Egyptian politics is always a bit murkier to penetrate for an outsider. And I have no doubt that Sadat had his own domestic constituency problems. Certainly one of them ultimately led to his assassination. But it was very clear with respect to Israel where a coalition government with a variety of options about the future of the territories was led by a prime minister who had a deep ideological commitment to permanent Israeli control of those territories but who had been led by a difficult negotiating situation for a great objective at Camp David to sign a document which certainly implied and went more than just implication in admitting the possibility that in a final status negotiation, five years hence, it was at least possible that those territories would be transferred to someone else. And it's clear that Prime Minister Begin stretched very hard at Camp David to deal with this contradiction in his own mind and found language which satisfied him with a lot of encouragement from Moshe Dayan and Justice Barach and others to convince him that he could sign a document which left this issue sufficiently ambiguous to satisfy his own conscience. But once he returned to Israel, he was, I think, truly shocked to discover the strength of opposition in his own party to what he had just signed. All of you remember, I'm sure, the marathon Knesset debate that occurred here just after Camp David. And I saw in Begin often in those days a sense of incredulity that his own loyal supporters in Herut, in particular, would think of rejecting his great work for peace and would not accept on face value his assurances that he would not really compromise any of his ideological principles or theirs. And the final vote, if you recall, while overwhelmingly for the agreement or for the package of agreements, still had a very large number of Begin's own party against him. That fact made, I believe,

tremendous impression on him which stuck with him throughout the rest of his peace diplomacy and made him extremely wary in the autonomy negotiations of agreeing to any form for this new concept of autonomy which his own domestic constituents would see as meaning inevitable transfer of territory to Jordan or someone else. And I think it lent an element of rigidity to the Israeli positions during the negotiations which was very difficult for even the most skillful negotiators to overcome.

Equally complicating from the domestic political side was the coalition nature of the negotiating team. And here I will touch on the next factor which is one that I would call the choice of negotiators. In a strange way all three governments made, in retrospect, questionable decisions about their negotiators and their negotiating style. And I wouldn't spare my own government from this by any means. In the Israeli case, it was clear that the dominant personality in the Israeli delegation at Camp David, intellectually, and the one with the greatest influence over the outcome was Moshe Dayan. Certainly Barach and Weizman played important roles, but I think all those there would agree that it was Dayan's own ideas and restless intellect which pushed the process forward time and time again at Camp David and before it and afterward in the peace treaty negotiations at Camp Madison, as the hotel was then called in Washington by the Israeli delegates. Suddenly, however, just as the great triumph of the peace treaty has been signed and one is gearing up to launch these pivotal autonomy negotiations, the foreign minister who was indeed in many respects a key architect of the treaty, learned that he would not be directing the negotiations for the autonomy talks, but that instead, for reasons ostensibly of coalition political requirements, there would be a six-man ministerial negotiating team headed by Dr. Borg. Of course, Dayan would be a member. Well, anybody who knew Dayan probably could have anticipated the outcome. And he himself told me before he died that he took that as a sign that there would be no autonomy agreement. And he had no desire to be a part of that kind of negotiating structure feeling it was unworkable. And indeed it proved to be almost unworkable, though not quite. And that's not to say anything critical of the individuals who were on the ministerial team, who were hardworking and loyal and

often creative. But that kind of structure meant that when the Israeli delegation went to a conference, three or four or five ministers all had to be there to speak for the delegation and watch each other. And when they came back from the conference, that group had to struggle with inter-coalition politics about, not the principles of the negotiation, which were well laid out by the cabinet in advance, but all of the details. And I think this fact really hampered the Israeli negotiators in taking advantage of openings and moments when some Egyptian flexibility would fleetingly appear.On the Egyptian side and the Israeli side as well, and here I really do demonstrate one of my biases, and to some extent on the American side, though less so, there were too many lawyers. Now you got to have lawyers at international negotiations. The American delegation at Camp David did not have a lawyer, except Cyrus Vance, who is an international lawyer of some repute, but we didn't have anybody else. The Israelis had several, the Egyptians were almost all lawyers. But President Sadat was not and neither was President Carter. And I would submit that with this kind of negotiation it's all too easy to allow the lawyers to dominate the policies, unless you're very careful on the roles they're assigned. And I think this seemed to be the case in the autonomy talks from both Egyptian and Israeli sides.

The negotiations moved from a beginning of concentrating on broad principle and became immersed within a matter of weeks in infinite detail - legal detail about how this autonomous entity would be administered, down to great levels of precision, the kind of precision that a city council might have to consider in lining up its own duties. The lawyers contributed, I think, to that trend, though they didn't create it. Perhaps what created it was a difference in style between the Egyptians and Israelis and a difference in purpose about the negotiation itself.

If one can go back for a moment to the Isma'iliya conference, a bilateral conference in which we were not involved, just after Sadat's visit here, it was clear at that conference that Sadat gave a lot of evidence to the Israelis for this thesis that all he really wanted was a general statement of principles to deal with the West Bank and Gaza that would permit him to go ahead and negotiate his own peace treaty and let the Palestinians and

the Jordanians come in and do the detail work on the autonomy program. He didn't want to get too deeply involved in that. Unfortunately, at Isma'iliya and at subsequent conferences before Camp David, that concept of a broad framework of principles gradually changed to an increasing insistence on great specificity in detail as to how precisely autonomy would function once inaugurated. And the further we got into those details, the further we were away from reaching any agreement.

Why was that? I think for two reasons: The primary one was another factor which was one of the great flaws and perhaps the fundamental flaw in the design of these negotiations. And that is that Egypt, in the absence of Jordan, and in the absence of any Palestinian representatives, took upon itself to speak for the Palestinians in these negotiations. And yet it became very clear early in the negotiations that the Egyptians at that time at least had very little direct knowledge of or understanding of the factors on the ground in the territories, what the territories were really like, after a dozen years of Israeli occupation. And they were very wary, the Egyptians, of getting into detail because they felt uncomfortable; they might agree to something which would jeopardize Palestinian rights without realizing it and put themselves open to tremendous attack subsequently from the other Arabs.

On the other hand, the Israeli delegation understandably, the more they thought about what autonomy might mean and the more Begin's rather generalized concept which he presented first to President Carter and then to President Sadat in December of '79, the more the staffs in the Ministry of Defense and the Foreign Ministry in particular, began to look into the fine print of how the territories operate today, in economic terms and security terms, development terms, legal terms, they began to find more and more and more problems with autonomy as a concept. And, inevitably, they tried to pin down as specifically as possible all of the possible alternative pitfalls that one could imagine for Israel's security coming out of this negotiation. So as the Israelis got more and more interested in detail, the Egyptians, hemmed in by their lack of any other Arab participant

and nervous about representing those Palestinians in absentia, became more and more rigid about dealing with those precise details.

I mentioned another factor a moment ago, the personalities of negotiators. I've mentioned the political problem that the style of ministerial team negotiation adopted by the Israeli's presented. I think from the American point of view we had a different problem. Our first chief negotiator, Bob Strauss, had just completed an extraordinary tour de force, negotiating an international trade agreement and getting it through the Congress unanimously, one of the best pieces of diplomacy and politics that anybody has done in the United States for a long time, and President Carter turned to Bob Strauss as a highly successful negotiator with a lot of political smarts and close to him personally as his representative. Bob Strauss had never been near the Middle East before and admitted it and he didn't want the job, but he accepted it as a loyal servant of the Administration. But I think it did not take him, and it certainly didn't take me, more than about fifteen minutes of exposure to him in his environment to realize that he was really ill-suited for the particular kind of subtle third party mediation that this required from the United States. He tried a lot of his negotiating devices which had been honed on dealing with the Japanese and the Germans on trade matters and in Texas politics and they just didn't work in this environment. There was a real cultural problem between Bob and the Middle East and I think he would admit it if he were here today. Almost from the minute he took the job he was conspiring to get out of it and it took him about six months to manage that.

He was replaced by Sol Linowitz, a very distinguished lawyer and a man of great subtlety and formality and dignity. And, incidentally, Bob Strauss' informality, which was very effective in domestic U.S. politics, proved to be something of a drawback in dealing with the more formal Egyptians and certainly rather formal Israelis. Sol Linowitz had I think, and has, the personal qualifications and the personal style that could have made him a very effective and successful mediator for the United States in this tri-partite strange kind of negotiations.

Here the problem was not style but timing, and this comes to the question of timing, which I believe was crucial in the ultimate stalemate. There was a sense that this was do-able after the peace treaty. There was a lot of political momentum, there was a real commitment from Begin, Sadat and Carter. Unfortunately, the negotiations began in a rather leisurely mode and went on in a rather leisurely mode for six or eight months, and I remember getting instructions during that period to try to go in and convince our friend here that time was a wasting asset and that we should step up the pace and have more meetings and get past the formalities and do away with the opening statements and get down to work. And I got very polite stalls, the same kind of reaction in Cairo.

We the Americans did have a sense of worry about the timing, but in retrospect we didn't have nearly enough of a worry. And it was precisely this period of the first three or four months when the international environment was accepting of this kind of negotiation, when the momentum from Camp David was running, when you had a smell of victory around this process, that in retrospect we had the opportunity. I believe today that if we had to do it over again, and knew what we know now, which unfortunately history never gives you that opportunity, we could reach agreement on that autonomy package in four months, starting from where we were starting in May of 1979. By the time Sol Linowitz took the job, the time factor had turned very much against us. In the first place, what seemed like a sensible period of one year for this negotiation, now suddenly seemed very short, only a few months left. I remember Cy Vance tried to convince both the Egyptians and the Israelis not to put a time limit in this letter. He said, “I've had experience with this kind of thing and a time limit comes back to haunt you.” And indeed it did come back to haunt us because as Linowitz got pretty much involved in high gear in early 1980, already enough troubling events had occurred to change the psychology surrounding the negotiation and the suspicions surrounding that target date began to rise almost geometrically, suspicions that we, either we Egyptians or we Israelis, are going to be pressured by you Americans to make some unwise and dangerous concessions in order to get done within a year, and those suspicions began to make the positions of the parties more rigid rather than less.

It's true also that time had begun to divert the attention of the American Administration. President Carter had been devoting for two years at this point an extraordinary amount of personal energy to the Middle East Peace Process, something more than any other president has ever done or, I suspect, ever will do. But beginning with the invasion of Afghanistan and, more importantly of course, the hostage crisis in Iran, his Administration in 1980 began to be more and more and more sucked into a preoccupation with these other issues, particularly the hostage crisis which ultimately, as we all know, probably was the deciding factor in his defeat in the November elections. So while we kept up a lot of diplomatic energy throughout 1980, I have to say that our President's weight in the equation was diminished, and given the crucial factor he played at Camp David itself, that certainly was an element in the ultimate stalemate.

I have also touched on the problem of the press, and I'd like to come back to it now, and it's not only the press I want to mention as factors in this stalemate, certainly I don't want to give it more importance than it deserves. One should put it this way I think, that the nature of the structure of this negotiation, very public, moving from one country to another, episodic, with a lot of time between meetings to debate endlessly in the press every aspect of the negotiation itself, removed substantially what flexibility there was for the diplomats to use in the closed doors of the diplomacy behind the scenes. And, moreover, a series of external events certainly impinged on the politics of both countries and further complicated, I think, the efforts of the diplomatic actors. For example, one only has to recall that as one got passed this one year deadline in April, early May really of 1980, without reaching agreement, and the last meetings before that deadline were very acrimonious, there were such unfortunate, extraneous factors which impinged on the attitudes of the Israeli Government toward the United States and the Egyptian Government toward Israel, and the U.S. Government toward Israel. Events such as President Carter's now quite famous change of the vote in the UN Security Council in mid-spring of 1980, a mistake about the wording which led to great embarrassment for him and great distrust, I might say, here. The introduction by one of the members of the Knesset in May 14,

1980, of the quite superfluous Jerusalem bill which set the Egyptians' teeth on edge and produced a period of several weeks of angry debate about Jerusalem which was really quite irrelevant to the current negotiating climate but succeeded in poisoning that climate very substantially just at the moment when the autonomy talks were at a stage of considerable delicacy.

You will recall that in May of 1980 there were the tragic events in Hebron of the shooting of the Yeshiva students followed by the expulsion of the mayors and subsequently of the bombing of the mayors. All of that period certainly contributed from the outside to the feelings of distrust and drawing back on the part of the Egyptians from risking going to an agreement with Israel under these circumstances, risking in its own sense its position with other Arab nations. And there were a lot of other external events later which are perhaps best forgotten. But the historians, I think, will read this interaction between the external world and the room of the negotiators as being one of the major issues which cause negotiations to fail. Surely any negotiations which drags on for eighteen months without success is going to be plagued by external factors in this region. It's too volatile an area. That's why in retrospect we should have made far greater efforts to do it three months before the external world could come to bear in all of its hoary detail.

There are a couple of other factors that I think I will mention just in passing, which I do think affected the stalemate: one was the fact that, while it was true that both governments put a lot of emphasis on these negotiations, it was also true that all three governments, and I certainly associate my own, were determined that nothing would throw that treaty off course, and that the provisions for withdrawal under the treaty and exchange of ambassadors and the panoply of peace between Egypt and Israel, the concrete achievement that had been gained, would not be lost. There were moments along the way when, in order not to ruffle the Egyptian feathers or the Israeli feathers in a way which could interfere with the delicate progress up to the final moment of the treaty implementation, I think we drew back from pressing a compromise formula which had good chances of achievement and I think the Egyptians and the Israelis also treated their

interlocutors with excessive tenderness, both of them preoccupied with the implementation of the treaty.

Another factor which it seems to me ran all through this period is the problem of cultural gap between the two Israeli and Egyptian societies. Many of you are much greater experts on this than I am. I can only tell you from personal experience, I spent an enormous amount of time, over three years, explaining, or trying to explain Egyptian behavior to Israeli negotiators and my colleagues in Cairo did the reverse, never very successfully, and it didn't matter really, seemingly, whether they were in direct contact with each other or not, they were still misunderstanding each other just as consistently face to face as they had been at long distance. And much of the U.S. role was pacification and interpretation of cultural sensitivities to one party or the other. I'm convinced, as I've said this in other forums here, that there is something intrinsic to Arab society which makes it very difficult, and I'm told it comes out of ancient Bedouin traditions. Very difficult to negotiate give and take, face to face, on an issue of national honor or personal honor. You must use intermediaries to deal with these issues in Arab society and then once an agreement is reached, you have a very fancy reunion and you slaughter a sheep and you accept the result that has already been reached. But you don't really negotiate about a matter of honor directly with your adversary because to make a concession to him directly is a great loss of face to you as an individual and you can afford to make concessions only to someone else who will convey it to your adversary.

Now I can give you many different examples how this played out in these negotiations but I'll just cite one. I remember very vividly in Herzliyya at the Sharon Hotel, we were having one round of the autonomy negotiations, everybody was eating together, talking together, Ministers from both sides were there and by this time they had become quite good friends, they had been seeing one another for the better part of two years off and on and they really liked each other as individuals. We sat down to formal sessions, each would make their formal statements, there would be no sign of give and take, give and take amounted to restatement of positions with a little more bellicosity from both sides, then you would

adjourn and each would go back to his own rooms and Sol Linowitz would scurry back and forth from one room to the other, talking first to one then the other. So in what was ostensibly a direct negotiation, progress was made in what we now call proximity talks model. And this is the kind of microcosm, it seems to me, of a cultural problem which we had seen also in the Lebanese negotiations, a very parallel circumstance back in 1983, and I suspect will continue to dog Israeli problems of negotiations with Arabs so long as those negotiations continue.

I think that there are undoubtedly a lot of other factors that bogged us down in those years but certainly after 1981 there were some important new ones. And the biggest new one was President Carter was defeated and then later in 1981 President Sadat was shot. And I think no one can underestimate this point. These three men went through hell to reach the Camp David Agreement and each of them made great sacrifices and took great risks in his own mind to sign that document. And Carter also took great risks and won temporary political gain for it. They had a personal stake in it, they had convinced themselves it could be done and then they began to leave the stage. Moreover, in our case, President Reagan came in with no stake in that success of his predecessor's administration and with a rather different view of the world, that I gather was well described this morning by Professor Spiegel, so I won't touch on that, but I think it's quite relevant that the Reagan Administration looked at the Middle East very differently than the Carter Administration; looked at it much more in east/west terms and strategic alliances against Soviet alliances terms. They never repudiated Camp David, in fact Secretary Shultz when he took office in the summer of '82 knew very little about Camp David and was very skeptical about it. A few months ago he said to me and he's said to a number of people since: “You know, I have read and re-read the Camp David Agreement, and now each time I read it I realize what a document, what a work of genius it really was.” But they didn't come into office thinking that way, certainly Al Haig didn't and Shultz didn't either when he took over. So our Administration had less fervent, emotional commitment to complete the Camp David

process, though they certainly adopted it and saw in general the virtues of not allowing it to die.

But there were a lot of other things that happened in 1981 that really put the “kibosh” on this whole game, and I think probably the most significant of all was the so-called “Ofira, Osiraq, double-cross.” You all will remember that with great difficulty Prime Minister Begin succeeded in getting Sadat to come to a summit meeting in Ofira on June 5, 1981 and their purpose was to renew the momentum and the spirit of the negotiations. Two days later the Iraqi reactor was bombed and I gather from my Egyptian contacts and from those of you who know lots of Egyptians, that there is no one in Egypt, and perhaps nowhere in the Arab world, who will ever believe that this wasn't a deliberate attempt to set Sadat up for involvement in and psychological tying to the Israeli action. I don't believe that but I'll just tell you that there are too many Arabs that do and it left a sensitivity in Egypt to a wariness about summits, which incidentally still exists.

There were other advances of that summer and certainly as the summer wore on there was a brief flowering for a moment of hope when there was yet another summit at Alexandria. And Sadat and Begin went back to the idea of a broad principles document which they had abandoned in the course of these negotiations long since. As a result of that summit we held one more ministerial level autonomy conference and it was interesting to me particularly because Roy Atherton, then our Ambassador in Cairo and I were the two co-delegates for the United States, we having at that time no special U.S. negotiator. And at that ministerial meeting in Cairo we came some distance toward agreeing on a document of general principles. Whether it would have amounted to anything ultimately I can't say, but there was a renewal of some hope and progress though a great skepticism remained on both sides, and then of course, just a few days later on October 6, Sadat was assassinated.

By the end of the year, though the formalities went on, the game was really over. And it's certainly true that throughout the rest of '81 and the first half of '82 Egyptian-Israeli

relations were dominated by carrying out the final withdrawal, the tragedy of Yammit which we all had to witness on television or in person, soured the atmosphere here toward Egypt and toward the peace, and soured the Egyptian attitude toward the Israeli government in very significant ways. Yet, once withdrawal was completed in 1982 there was a brief final flowering between the end of April and the beginning of June, and those many normalization agreements which had been signed back in 1980 began to come to life again and there were exchanges of delegations planned and the beginnings of new trade agreements, all of which withered and died in the bright pitiless sun of the Israeli move into Lebanon in early June.

The Reagan initiative on September 1 was a genuine effort to recreate momentum, to relaunch the Camp David agreement, with some embellishments, but fundamentally on the same terms. The timing was, in my judgment, abysmal, the tactics of its presentation worse, and the outcome so far, nil.

In conclusion, I would say that there are a lot of mistakes implicit in this record for all three countries. And I won't try to recapitulate all of them. I think you can infer from my remarks what I think some of the mistakes were. But I would say for each of us there was one over-riding misjudgment. For the Egyptians, I think there was a very great overriding misjudgment when Sadat said, “Well, Hussein, you won't come and join,” parenthetically it's not surprising he wouldn't come and join because Sadat had persuaded him and President Carter, I guess, in different ways that it was best that Jordan not be present —it would be too difficult to reach agreement if they were there. It probably would have been too. But the fact that he wasn't there and had no signature on that document made it difficult to persuade him later to accept Camp David as his framework though we tried very hard. In any case, when it didn't happen, Sadat said, “I will take on responsibility for the Arab side of this negotiation.” That was a terrible fundamental error if you wanted to succeed. In retrospect it's very clear. The Egyptians were hamstrung when they took that

role without having any Palestinians or Jordanians at their sides, and the Reagan initiative is certainly intended to remedy that mistake.

I think Israel's overriding misjudgment was the one I've already suggested. I believe that most Israeli actors for a long time believed that what to Egypt was a choice of peace, and a peace which would make Egypt able to bridge between Israel and the Arab world and would enable Egypt to take the lead in resolving the Palestinian problem—too many Israelis thought that that choice of peace was a choice of Israel as a strategic ally against the Arab world. That's an overstatement, but I would submit not too exaggerated a view of many Israelis after Camp David and during these years we've been discussing. I think that's an illusion which is now dispelled, but a lot of water has gone over the dam.

On our side, we had at least three major mistakes and probably a lot of others. I've suggested we mismanaged and misunderstood the importance of time and urgency, though we understood it better than the other two partners. We made some weak, or incorrect decisions in negotiating style, personalities, hesitance in pushing some of our ideas which both parties, we believe in retrospect, wanted us to push. And finally I think, we perhaps tried to play this role of honest broker, mediator, catalyst, participant, partner, whatever you'd want to describe it—we wanted to play it only with carrots.

End of interview