

U.S.-Israeli Policies: Reading the Signs for '77

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The real crunch for Israel will probably come during 1977 if Ford is elected—it will be delayed by only a few months if a Democratic candidate wins." So writes Wolf Blitzer, editor of the "Jewish lobby's" Washington publication *Near East Report*, in a recent issue of the *Jerusalem Post*.

With the same sense of urgency Abba Eban insists that "Time is of the essence, and unhappily for us, time is running out. We ought to grasp the central issues now and involve the United States in resolving them." He and a growing number of his colleagues fear that should Israel not choose to "cooperate" with the U.S., the Americans might run right over Israel on the road to Geneva and some form of imposed settlement.

Arie Lova Eliav, a former Secretary-General of the dominant Labor Party and probably Israel's most respected "dove," sadly reflects on his recent American tour: If a U.S. peace initiative "is rammed down Israel's throat, it will not be good for us... But given the present relation of forces, I am afraid that this is what is likely to happen."

Even one of Israel's most respected Arabists, Yehoshafat Harkabi, publicly cautions that "it does not seem reasonable... from a perspective of real historical considerations, that Israel can withstand this pressure for long." Israel must make major political concessions, if only for tactical and public opinion reasons, Harkabi believes. Among the changes must be a willingness to contemplate a separate Palestinian state. The all-important question, of course, is who will represent the Palestinians. "The only obvious Palestinian body now is the PLO," Harkabi recently wrote, shaking up many Israelis who have come to view his words as near gospel

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on the inescapable "Palestinian problem."

No matter who occupies the White House and who runs Foggy Bottom in a few months' time, 1977 is shaping up as a year of possibly unprecedented political confrontation between Israel and the United States. The necessity for repeated public denials by both sides only serves to substantiate the likelihood of the impending clash.

The rough framework of an American peace plan more imaginative and carrying more momentum than the Rogers Plan of 1969 has already emerged in Washington. State Department officials are currently completing various option papers—the bureaucratic foundation from which a newly elected President could take decisive steps in an attempt to break the new Middle East stalemate.

In Israel

Of course many Israelis are hoping for a further reprieve. After all, the American-Israeli tug-of-war has been going on ever since the "evenhandedness" report of Governor Scranton at the time Nixon first assumed the Presidency—and the Israelis have managed so far to get by. Now the Lebanese civil war (which has enveloped the Palestinians) and the likelihood of a new American President and Secretary of State (bound to the strongly pro-Israeli Democratic platform) are used to argue that the time is surely not ripe for even considering political initiatives.

Contemporary Israeli toughness, however, actually masks the spreading awareness that the Jewish state will sooner or later be forced to alter basic political positions. Many in the Israeli Peace Movement and in associated American Jewish groups are trying to prepare both Israeli and American Jewry for policies hitherto considered tantamount to national suicide. While writers for *Commentary* magazine fear and criticize the alleged American "abandonment of Israel," others are just as desperately attempting to convince Israelis that a joint U.S.-Israel posture is essential. Such a united approach, the argument goes, must be based on certain Israeli

policy changes and may offer Israel the only possibility of attempting peace with the Arabs while at the same time assuring the continuance of overall U.S. support.

In essence, the Israeli Government is stubbornly fighting and losing a number of political battles. A few Israelis—those most sensitive to the worldwide lineup of political forces—advocate conceding a number of admittedly important battles and then regrouping behind more defensible political positions for battles yet to come in the ongoing struggle. “Particularly since we shall yet need to take firm stands, a measure of moderation is called for today,” Harkabi pleads.

The Rabin government, however, is stalemated and unable to take any initiatives on the crucial territorial and Palestinian issues—which Eban has in mind when he advocates a joint Israeli-U.S. front—other than to “decide not to decide.” The Land of Israel Movement and the competing Peace Movement now hold each other in check and challenge each other with street marches. “Between *Gush Emunim* on the right and *Moked* on the left,” one Israeli journalist writes, “most of the public vacillates from side to side because it has difficulty choosing between the two opposing poles.” The Israelis do, of course, want peace, but they are totally divided on how it might be accomplished, and their leadership has failed them.

The role of Prime Minister in Israel has become more like that of a group chairman than of the American President. Rabin is simply unable to take the required bold initiatives urged upon him by so many at home and abroad. In fact, a chorus of well-known academics, politicians, and journalists is engaged in increasingly urgent efforts to convince the government that it must finally face today’s predicament—one caused partially by the pressures building within the American Government, but also partly the result of the serious decline in Israeli economic and political fortunes since the Yom Kippur War nearly three years ago.

Domestic Israeli politics has paralyzed the government, and—ironically—threats of an imposed settlement from outside seem only to strengthen the more intransigent elements. Today’s growing siege mentality within Israel may yet backfire on U.S. policy-makers, whose strategy centers on the belief that continual and increasing pressure will slowly produce flexibility, as it did during the Sinai negotiations. At least a few highly respected American Jews argue against using American economic and military aid as a stick on the grounds that increased pressure will strengthen Israel’s refusal to follow the U.S. lead. This remains the case even though an increasing number of these same Jews acknowledge the drift of American policies toward the Palestinians and in opposition to Israeli settlements in the occupied territories.

Though there is some hope that Israelis are beginning to appreciate the dynamics of the U.S.-Israel relationship—for instance, the *Jerusalem Post* has come to the realization that “We can no longer afford the luxury of granting primacy to considerations of internal politics”—the way to actual political reform remains uncharted, even with Yigal Yadin’s advocacy of a total overhaul of the political system.

Former Minister of Information Aharon Yariv, a leading member of the ever stronger chorus, recently returned from an American visit to warn his countrymen that the U.S. is becoming dangerously frustrated and might decide to recognize the PLO and support the creation of a Palestinian state. “They are getting fed up,” he bluntly and correctly informed the Israeli public. “One day they might just lay it down the line to us: Take it or leave it.... We’ve got to decide what we want.” Facing the domestic political nightmare now seems preferable to continuing inaction, Yariv seems to have concluded, publicly informing Rabin that “We might as well have it out at last: we’re tearing ourselves apart anyway.” And since Yariv’s comments earlier this year, Rabin’s position has deteriorated further. But if there are no bold initiatives on Israel’s immediate political horizon, there are quite a few singular voices suggesting the way.

Cabinet Minister of Health Victor Shemtov, admittedly a dove of long standing, believes that “The Government must stand up before the people and tell it the truth. We have to wake up from our delusions. ... There is no avoiding returning most of the territories in order to find a solution.” The respected young chairman of Tel Aviv University’s history department, Shimon Shamir, sees the urgency here: “Israel desperately needs a more positive position through which she could offer all elements in the Palestinian world an entrance into political discussions on the Palestinian problem aimed at bringing peace to the Middle East.” “Some of Rabin’s statements,” he has announced, “seem so divorced from the present reality in the Middle East that it was difficult to believe that he meant what he said.”

Beyond individual pleas for basic changes in political posture, a significant new organization that goes beyond party lines has been created—the Israel Council for Israeli-Palestine Peace. It is a conglomeration that, to be candid, has little political clout, but whose principles and platform command attention. With a number of establishment figures and headed by Arie Lova Eliav, a man with impeccable Zionist credentials, this Council has issued a direct challenge to government doctrine in the form of a twelve-point Manifesto. The Knesset and the coalition have both completely overlooked the challenge, but political effect goes beyond political power in this case.

Besides advocating a separate Palestinian state on the West Bank, the group calls for negotiations with the PLO “on the basis of mutual recognition.” “The heart of the conflict... is the historical confrontation between the two peoples of this land... the people of Israel and the Palestinian Arab people.” This is a position nearly identical to the formulation by State Department spokesman Harold Saunders before a subcommittee of the Congress last November—testimony that the Israeli Government has loudly and repeatedly attacked, though with little effect upon the State Department’s new course.

Israeli journalist Matti Golan, author of the just-released *The Secret Conversations of Henry Kissinger*, sums up the situation well in an article in the April issue of the American Zionist monthly *Midstream*.

"Mr. Rabin has just about used up the time he has been able to gain," Golan concludes. "For while he was busy counting the months and weeks...the Arabs were assiduously using the same time to acquire broad political support, even from formerly unsympathetic places. And so Israel has arrived unprepared at the time of decision....Israel has arrived at her moment of truth."

But there is currently no Ben-Gurion in the Jewish state with authority to call a retreat from untenable political positions. Consequently, the place of decision on how to proceed has shifted to Washington, leaving the Israelis girding for an American-inspired political thunderstorm whose rainfall will be welcomed by some, however damaging the accompanying political destruction. The likely necessity for determined American efforts—including the possibility of some form of an imposed quasi-settlement that could at least defuse the conflict—is shared by some of Israel's friends along with many of Israel's detractors.

In the U.S.

American journalist Edward Sheehan, whose important exposé "How Kissinger Did It" recently appeared in *Foreign Policy*, has revealed the most comprehensive picture to date of U.S. Middle East policy since the Yom Kippur War.

The Middle East quagmire, Israeli paralysis, and threatening Arab pressures have forced on many American policy-makers a near consensus that the basic plan for Middle East settlement developed during the 1975 "reassessment" is, in Sheehan's words, "an imperative that will confront the next President of the U.S." His conclusion that "the next administration will be unable to avoid the urgency of a general peace" has become contemporary wisdom in many quarters in the Middle East and Washington. "That peace," Sheehan writes, "will perforce be based upon the 1967 boundaries, buttressed by guarantees for Israel that can include a defense treaty with the U.S. should Israel require further assurance of her security."

More recently, Sheehan has spoken of a plan that includes joint U.S.-USSR guarantees of a new Middle East status quo. Renewed Israeli interest in reestablishing relations with the Soviet Union might make such a plan feasible. In fact, the Soviets are reportedly prepared to renew formal contact once Israel allows some form of separate Palestinian representation at the Geneva talks. And the troubled Israelis may well play their Soviet card should U.S. pressure become unbearable. Doing so might give them a greater degree of maneuverability at Geneva, even though the price might be a basic and difficult reorientation of worldwide Jewish attitudes toward the Soviet Union, especially on the sensitive issue of Soviet Jewry.

It has become evident in Washington these past months—with the Saunders statement, the fiscal 1977 aid cut, the Ford threat to veto transitional aid, the arms relationship developing with Egypt (so far only C-130s), the Scranton U.N. attack on Israeli policies in the occupied territories and in Jerusalem, and the perceptible decline in power of the Israel-Jewish lobby—it has

become evident with all this that Ford, Kissinger, and the Foggy Bottom professionals have a definite policy direction. They have been rather skillfully maneuvering to position the U.S. for the possible imposition of a settlement on Israel and the various Arab parties, including the Palestinians. Should the U.S. finally pursue this course, most of the tangible concessions will have to come, no doubt, from the Israelis—though it is becoming clearer that the major Arab confrontation states and "moderate" elements in the PLO might be preparing for major return concessions.

The anxiety felt by many in Israel and in the American Jewish community about Arab intentions and American ability to guarantee any settlement is justifiable. (Two monographs have recently been published in the U.S. on a U.S. guarantee for Israel's security. The first, by this author, is titled *A United States Guarantee for Israel?* [Washington: Center for Strategic and International Studies]. The second, by a former State Department official, N.A. Pelcovits, is titled *Security Guarantees in a Middle East Settlement* [Beverly Hills: SAGE, The Foreign Policy Papers, Vol. 2, No. 1].)

But the fact remains—and is now widely recognized—that U.S. diplomatic pressure will escalate in the postelection period regardless of the election results. "Scoop" Jackson may have been the last hope for those in Israel counting on a retrenchment from the new American policy orientation that emerged from the "reassessment."

Even Prime Minister Rabin has confirmed, though cautiously, that serious trouble is now visible. In an Independence Day TV interview in early May he told the Israelis that "It is not to be ruled out that in 1977 we shall see tendencies to concessions...namely, erosion in the U.S. position on the Palestinian issue in the Geneva peace talks." The Prime Minister did not point out, however, that such an erosion would imply American willingness to contemplate a Palestinian state under certain yet-to-be-specified conditions. That Rabin took this unprecedented step of airing such major U.S.-Israel differences in public is surely a sign of deepening gloom in Jerusalem.

The "Reassessment" in Review

To really understand what has been happening and will probably occur shortly after the beginning of the next administration, it is necessary to refocus on the March, 1975, "reassessment." Those months now seem almost as forgotten as the Vietnam war, which was reaching its inevitable conclusion during the very months of American Middle East rethinking. Somewhat more than a year ago, in mid-May, 1975, the results of this "reassessment" had to be temporarily shelved—along with its predecessor, the Rogers Plan—largely for domestic political reasons. But a new view of basic American Middle East interests and options became firmly established within the American Government, and this view remains very much alive.

The "reassessment" was, in fact, an excuse for the public presentation of new policies that had flowed from foreign policy shifts begun in the days of the Yom Kippur War. These shifts account for the continuing U.S.-Egyptian flirtation and for the cautious but undeniable

U.S. steps toward recognition of Palestinian national rights.

What has happened to the "reassessment"? Sheehan provides a large part of the answer. Realizing the domestic constraints on American Middle East efforts, and failing to achieve a major American initiative after months of maneuvering, Kissinger decided in May, 1975, that "at some future date, when the president was stronger, when his prospects were more auspicious, he might go to the people with a plan for peace based upon the first option." This is what is likely to occur in 1977 regardless of who is at the helm of American foreign policy. The logic of things has taken over, propelled by the relentless fears of what a tragedy another Middle East war could be for American strategic and economic interests throughout the Middle East.

The Brookings Report

The first of the three options to emerge from the 1975 "reassessment" turns out to be remarkably similar to what Washington's prestigious Brookings Institution put forth last December in the form of a short report entitled "Toward Peace in the Middle East." The report received considerable attention in the Middle East as an American outline for a Middle East settlement (which it is), but for various reasons it achieved insufficient notice at home. For one thing, Brookings released the report rather cautiously, with little fanfare and follow-up promotion. Even so, one Israeli newspaper termed the report "officially sanctioned," and there is a growing realization that the report may be the most significant surfacing of basic American thinking since the Rogers Plan seven years ago this December—the Brookings report resulting from the Yom Kippur War as the Rogers Plan had stemmed from the Six-Day War.

In brief, the Brookings Report contains these principles: an Israeli withdrawal to the 1967 borders; recognition of "the principle of Palestinian self-determination"; resolution, probably at Geneva, of all outstanding issues, including Jerusalem, thus leading to peace between all of the parties; implementation of the agreement in stages over a number of years; and some arrangement of multilateral and bilateral guarantees, with the U.S. probably playing a unique role.

In fact, it can now be said with considerable assurance that the results of the now reemerging "reassessment" are nicely camouflaged within the pages of the Brookings pamphlet. Rather remarkably, the report is signed by a number of well-respected and influential Jewish community leaders—most notably Philip Klutznick and Rita Hauser. One representative of a major Jewish organization, however, refused to sign the document. Bertram Gold, Executive Director of the American Jewish Committee, was the only participant in the Brookings study group who later felt constrained by his organizational affiliation from signing the report. This must be interpreted as reluctance by even this independent and moderate Jewish organization to endorse at least some of the study's findings. It is known that Israeli Ambassador Dinitz personally lobbied hard to stop other Jewish members of the panel from signing.

The simple truth, as Sheehan accurately reports, is

that "Relations between the United States and Israel, which began to erode during the October War, have deteriorated to a condition of chronic crisis—dramatized by Kissinger's recurring clashes with Israeli leaders and Israel's American constituency." If there are any lingering doubts about the seriousness of these clashes, Matti Golan's *Secret Conversations* and Sheehan's soon to be published *The Arabs, Israelis and Kissinger* should end the debate. The 1975 "reassessment" was in a sense an initial climax in this continuing crisis. It began with President Ford's blunt and harsh letter to Prime Minister Rabin in late March insisting that Israel be more flexible. More recently it has included—to list the major public feuds once again—the Saunders statement acknowledging the Palestinian problem to be "the heart of the conflict" (the Israelis remain enraged about this), Ford's rebuff to American Jewish leaders over the C-130s for Egypt, the reduction in military aid for Israel in fiscal 1977, and U.N. Ambassador Scranton's calculated and repeated attacks on Israeli settlement policy in occupied territories as "illegal" and "an obstacle to peace."

Wolf Blitzer's prognosis for 1977, quoted at the outset, is becoming widely shared throughout Washington. True, a Jackson Presidency could have changed things, and a comprehensive Israeli peace initiative could still put the U.S. and Israel back on a more united course (at least for a while). But Abba Eban, Lova Eliav, Yehoshafat Harkabi, and Matti Golan are essentially right in saying that time is quickly running out for Israel. The road ahead, as Secretary Kissinger had the courage to tell a Jewish audience in Baltimore in May, "is almost certainly more difficult—but nonetheless inescapable—than the steps we have taken so far." "We do not prove our friendship by ignoring the realities we both face," Kissinger insisted. "We do not underestimate the dilemmas and risks that Israel faces in a negotiation. But they are dwarfed by a continuation of the status quo."

After the November election the U.S. will probably consider applying immense pressures upon beleaguered Israel for concessions over territories and for Palestinian self-determination. Though it is unlikely Israel really is waiting to be raped (or so at least one of world Jewry's most important leaders has described it to high officials in the State Department), the situation in Israel has become almost intolerable—stalemate is exactly what the U.S. has declared unacceptable. Rabbi Alexander Schindler, president of the umbrella organization linking nearly all major American Jewish organizations, recently returned from meetings with Israeli leaders saying that they "would almost be more comfortable, for domestic political reasons, if the decisions were imposed rather than articulated and accepted from within."

In this overall setting the Brookings Report seems the harbinger of an impending American peace plan whose broad dimensions are now public knowledge. The report's approach is similar both in timing and in substance to that of the Administration—but for Israel's supporters the sting of Kissinger's pressure tactics is missing. Largely influenced by former diplomat Charles Yost, the report is written in carefully balanced style. Yet the conclusions are unmistakable, and they have Israeli

officials deeply troubled. Indeed, had the report not been signed by so prominent an American Jew as Philip Klutznick, it might well have been strongly attacked by the American Jewish community acting as surrogate for official Israeli protests. Among the report's fifteen other signatories are: Zbigniew Brzezinski (Columbia University), Malcolm Kerr (UCLA), John C. Campbell (Council on Foreign Relations), and Nadav Safran (Harvard).

Those Three Options

According to Sheehan, whose factual reporting has not been substantially challenged, the 1975 "reassessment" yielded three options in order of desirability: (1) Forceful movement toward a comprehensive settlement; (2) Quasi-settlement with Egypt alone; (3) Revival of step-by-step, if nothing else proved politically feasible. From April through early May, 1975, practically everyone Kissinger consulted favored the first option:

The United States should announce its conception of a final settlement in the Middle East, based on the 1967 frontiers of Israel with minor modifications, and containing strong guarantees for Israel's security. The Geneva conference would be reconvened; the Soviet Union should be encouraged to cooperate in the quest to resolve all outstanding questions (including the status of Jerusalem) which should be defined in appropriate components and addressed in separate subcommittees.

To get around the Jewish lobby and Israeli attempts to frustrate implementation of such a policy, Sheehan reports that "Kissinger's advisors envisioned Ford going to the American people, explaining lucidly and at length on television the issues of war and peace in the Middle East, pleading the necessity for Israeli withdrawal in exchange for the strongest guarantees."

The lobby did, however, deliver a temporary "coup de grace" to these plans. Spearheaded by the then new and since then controversial Executive Director of the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC), Morris Amitay, a letter was sent on May 21 from seventy-six U.S. Senators to the President. This letter strongly endorsed Israel's demand for "defensible" frontiers and massive economic and military assistance. The message was crystal clear: Israel would fight through the Congress any attempt by Kissinger and Ford to consummate publicly the shift in American policy. (The previous month in a *Commentary* article Theodore Draper rather openly warned the Administration that "The consequences of attempting to impose a one-sided settlement on Israel, covered up by a less-than-convincing guarantee, could be traumatic for both Israel and the U.S.")

This effort of the Israeli-Jewish lobby, effective at the time, may in retrospect appear something of an error. For it did not really halt the implementation of new American policies. What it did do was prevent the public articulation of America's conception of a Middle East compromise—a conception that emerged half a year later in the form of the "officially sanctioned" Brookings Report. Ironically, the warning contained in the

Senators' letter helped create a situation in which Israel's supporters were largely prevented from challenging the fundamentals of the new but cryptic American policy and were, instead, forced to focus on the slow and subtle manifestations of pressure that have constantly escalated during the past year (with some lull during these election months). Those who truly believe American policy has become misguided have not had the advantage of an articulated policy that could be challenged. As one Israeli newspaper reported in April, the U.S. is pursuing a policy of "deliberate ambiguity" and "there is a widening gulf between the Ford Administration's words and actions regarding Israel." This is an accurate assessment, but incomplete. Just as the internal political situation in the Jewish state imposes severe limitations on Israeli flexibility, so have domestic American politics become a barrier to the public presentation of new and evolving policies.

Apparently, factions in the Israeli government are still determined to force a confrontation with the U.S. over the Palestinian issue, the occupied territories, and the Geneva conference. They hope through this threat to possibly deter, or through actual political battle to halt, further movement toward any imposed settlement. But the postelection year of 1977 will be unlike 1975. And Israelis should recall the postelection year of 1969 (not to mention 1957), when, as one Israeli scholar remembers, "differences between the U.S. and Israel were leading to a crisis of major proportions in relations between the two countries."

This attitude of confrontation with the U.S. was most recently dramatized in March, following Ambassador Scranton's U.N. attack on Israeli policies. Prime Minister Rabin went on television immediately to declare that Israel's sovereignty over Jerusalem is an immutable fact. And Foreign Minister Allon indicated that only the subsequent U.S. veto of the Security Council resolution protesting Israeli policies prevented a "big and far-reaching" crisis between the two countries.

In later months, while the *Jerusalem Post* was reporting an Israeli consensus that the 1967 border "is certainly unacceptable both as a future border and as the limit of Jewish settlement," the *New York Times* editorialized that "a direct clash between Washington and Jerusalem [over Israeli settlement policies] is bound to occur" and that "Israel's leaders must ask themselves whether they are really serving their country's interests by heading straight into such a confrontation." Likewise the *Washington Post*, which bluntly stated in a mid-May editorial: "Israelis who tell themselves—and others who tell Israelis—that they can have great chunks of pre-1967 Arab territory and peace are indulging in a cruel deception. A wise Israeli government would be positioning itself politically for the diplomatic test sure to come when the United States turns to this dilemma."

But the events of 1969 are not an adequate analogy for the serious confrontation that could erupt between the U.S. and Israel. American leverage today is incomparably greater than just a few years ago. For one thing, Israel has become something of a U.S. dependency both militarily and economically. Already suffering from skyrocketing inflation and a declining standard of living,

Israel's foreign debt is now nearly \$2,500 per capita, nearly five times that of any other country. There is even talk of Israel defaulting on loans due the U.S. unless huge amounts of additional U.S. aid are granted. "Israel's economy is strained to the limit," AIPAC's Morris Amitay testified before a House Appropriations subcommittee in April. "Israel's 1975 GNP declined by 1.8 per cent from 1974 and the GNP is not expected to increase this year." In such a situation American influence, both through the purse and through the military pipeline, can be magnified to immense proportions by a determined American administration, much as arms supplies were used by Kissinger to keep Israel in line during the Yom Kippur War.

To date the Israeli response has been a relatively quiet one, but there have been subtle and unofficial threats, primarily through the public speeches of Moshe Dayan, that Israel will turn to nuclear weapons as a way of decreasing dependency upon the U.S. (An article in *Commentary* by Professor Robert Tucker last November carried much the same threat. See "Israel and the United States: From Dependency to Nuclear Weapons." See also a response by Mark Bruzonsky and Israel Singer, "Dependent Israel: The Two Options," in *Worldview*, April, 1976.)

Israel's Last Chance?

For over a year now the Israeli-American relationship has been severely strained and has continually deteriorated. Ford's March, 1976, showdown with Jewish leaders at the White House over the Egyptian C-130s has been privately described as a "disaster" for Jewish political influence in this country. And a few weeks later, at the time of Ford's threat to veto transitional aid funding, the World Zionist Organization declared in a report from Jerusalem that "Never before had an American President adopted such a hostile line as that being taken on the interim aid."

Less than a year after the new Executive Director of AIPAC publicly reflected with much confidence that "we've never lost on a major issue," important political battles in Washington are now being compromised and sometimes lost. The amount of aid for future years is no longer certain amidst signs of weariness even in the Congress. In recent hearings of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee's Near East Subcommittee on "Prospects for Peace in the Middle East" Senator Clifford P. Case stood almost alone in supporting the current Israeli political positions. Even Senator Jacob Javits quarreled with Israel publicly, declaring that "In these new settlements [in the occupied territories] the Israelis are strictly on their own." And another well-known pro-Israel Congressman recently told a former aide now living in Israel: "If you think support on the Hill for Israel is anything like it was two years ago, you're crazy."

Meanwhile, dissent from Israeli policies, even within the American Jewish community, can no longer be contained. In truth, various Jewish leaders in the U.S. have become increasingly anxious, and some are desperate and on edge wondering when the Israelis will come up with something other than discredited slogans. There

is even talk of the need for new leadership and tactics at AIPAC. But only a few Jewish professionals have stepped forward publicly. One is Henry Siegman, Executive Vice President of the umbrella organization, the Synagogue Council of America. Siegman has challenged Israeli policies, insisting that they "may contain the seeds of disaster," and has challenged the American Jewish community to end its "mindless dogmatism" and cease "suspend[ing] its own critical judgment entirely when it comes to Israeli foreign policy." There is an "irrational unwillingness to look at new realities," Siegman states, and he is implying here the danger to American Jewry if confronted with charges of "dual loyalty," which he sees as another dimension of the situation the Israelis must begin to consider.

Similar criticism of the entire framework of attitudes is now prevalent as well in Israel. Even Harkabi has spoken out bitterly: "...national thinking on the conflict is so shallow, and Israeli diplomacy so unconvincing," he recently wrote—his most biting commentary to date. Our "basic concern" should be "to enable an enlightened and honest person to support us, and I believe that many do want to support us, except that we ourselves repel them." And Shimon Shamir adds: "It may be that this is the last chance Israel will have to consolidate a position with the U.S. which would exchange PLO participation for meaningful and concrete concessions."

Israel faces an increasingly clear choice for 1977—accept the urgent necessity to come forth with a new approach toward return of the occupied territories, recognize the national rights of the Palestinians, and develop an overall approach to a reasonable settlement...or risk a major schism with the United States. There is a real possibility of intense political confrontation between the forces of the Land of Israel Movement and those of the Peace Movement. Or, failing that, that an Israeli-Jewish lobby will try to face down almost unbearable pressures from the U.S. in the hope that it can at least gain more time. Should the choice be made to fight the implementation of new American policies publicly, the American Jewish community will, for the first time, face the charge of "dual loyalty," as Siegman and many others fear. In addition, such a decision would further exacerbate Israeli fears of total isolation, increasing the likelihood that Israel would implement the regional nuclear balance-of-terror threat.

The alternatives for Israel, in concert with the U.S., to attempt some form of gradual peace are becoming increasingly distasteful and dangerous. Even a former Director-General of the Israeli Foreign Ministry, writing in an Israeli-sponsored publication in May, concludes that some form of imposed settlement "is precisely what may happen if Israel, apparently still hoping to gain time, does nothing before the presidential election in the United States....It is perfectly in the cards that the American President may 'work out a settlement' and, in effect, impose it." Indeed, the column continues, "It is taken for granted that whoever is elected President this coming November, whether he is a Democrat or Republican, will not let matters drift as they have been for so many years in the past."