

Let Us Talk Face to Face

An interview with Simcha Dinitz conducted by Mark Bruzonsky, Worldview associate editor, on the eve of Israel's recent election.

I want to begin by asking you to give an assessment of what President Carter has so far said on the Middle East. To my understanding he has talked about a three-part Middle East settlement, and although he hasn't specified exactly what he means, he has outlined what he means. I understand he has talked about minor adjustments from the 1967 borders, a Palestinian homeland probably in some of the occupied territories that Israel would withdraw from, and a real, meaningful, lasting peace. How do you assess the president's views?

President Carter spoke of three components that are essential for peace in the Middle East. The first one is peace and the essence of peace. The second one is the question of borders. And the third one the Palestinian question. The underlying thought behind all these statements was that he is not making judgments for the parties. The parties themselves must arrive at an agreed definition of all these components as a result of the negotiations between them. The final determinations are up to the parties, and I think this is an important point.

Why do I say this? Because, after all, if it is to be enduring, if it is to be just, if it is to be lasting, peace must be between us and the Arabs and not between us and the Americans—with all the respect that we hold for our American friends. When all is said and done we will have to live in the Middle East with Sadat, Assad, and Hussein and not with President Carter and not with Brzezinski and Secretary Vance. Secondly, any solution that is not the result of the innermost dialogue between Israel and the Arabs is bound to be not only artificial but fragile, because it will not come out of the consensus of the parties but, rather, out of an imposition of an outside factor. If it is to be preserved in spite of the will of the parties, it will have to be preserved by force—which will immediately be a question of an American involvement in the preservation and the execution of the arrangement, not only in giving its good offices for peace implementation. I don't think this is something that either Israel or the United States wants to see—a direct American involvement in the dispute in the Middle East in terms of physical involvement. I think the important thing is that

the president has emphasized that what we all must strive for—and this is in a sense the precondition for any meaningful solution—is that we know what we are talking about. What is peace? Because “peace” can be the vaguest word in the English language, or for that matter in any language.

If we are talking about peace, does the other condition, withdrawal with only minor modifications....

You don't think that I will not get to it. Peace, a settlement, in order to be conceivable at all, has to be based on the understanding, I repeat, of what we are trying to get, what is the aim. Peace as defined by President Carter is peace that is not only a declaration—definitely not merely a cessation of a state of war, an end to the state of war—but rather peace with components of realism in it; of open borders, of exchange of trade, of cultural exchange, of exchange of people, of exchange of tourists, of diplomatic exchange, etc., etc.

Why? And this is something I want to emphasize if I may. It is not because, with all due respect to our neighbors, Israel cannot survive without trading with Egypt or without cultural relations with Syria or without tourism from Saudi Arabia. The point is, if we are trying to understand the core of the issues, that we are living in a very transitory Arab world; an Arab world that can have a policy of accommodation today and a policy of confrontation tomorrow. And we have ample historical experience to go by. Therefore, if we are to assure that the State of Israel's permanence, not its fact but its permanence, is acquiesced to by the Arab people, by the Arab world, then something realistic has to happen, something that the man in the street in Cairo and Damascus and Amman will feel has happened to the Middle East—not merely a sign of purpose, or not merely a proclamation of good intentions. Only then will it be, not impossible, but difficult, for any subsequent Arab leader to change this reality by reneging on a commitment he took. Because the facts of the situation will speak for themselves. This is why for us, as I am happy to see for the President of the United States, it is such an important thing.

Now with regard to the other areas. We have always said and will continue to say that the question, the basic question between Israel and the Arab states, is not the territorial question. One has to ask himself why we are in

the Sinai, why we are in the Golan Heights, why we are in the West Bank. Because one bright Sunday morning we decided to take a stroll? We are there because we were attacked in these places; once, twice, three times, or we wouldn't be there. Mr. Assad would not have a problem explaining to the world today that he is prepared to have demilitarized zones had he kept the demilitarization of these same zones before 1967. Mr. Sadat would not have a question of trying to get us out of Sinai had he not attacked us from Sinai. And the same thing with King Hussein. He knows very well that in '67 he got a message from us that if he does not touch us, nothing will happen to him. But instead he shelled us, and instead he attacked us. As a result he lost the West Bank. Now what are we going to do on the question of the territories involved? Are we going to return to the situation exactly as it was, the same fragility and the same vulnerability that existed until 1967; the same vulnerability that produced all these wars? Or are we going to say, let us have what Security Council Resolution 242 calls for, secure borders?

But that does not seem to be President Carter's interpretation.

I will get to President Carter. You are interviewing me now, not President Carter.

No, I'm not asking you for your interpretation. I'm asking you how you feel about what the policies of this administration are.

But to tell you how I feel about the policies of this administration I have to tell you what my understanding of them is. And I don't see any contradiction so far between what I was telling you and what President Carter's statements are.

Some of my readers may.

Well, that is why, if you will allow me to finish, they might not. That is why we are talking about secure borders—and this is what Resolution 242 is talking about, and this is what President Carter talks about. We are not trying to reconstruct the '67 situation, neither does President Carter. What the changes should be—as President Carter defined them at one point, minor adjustments, or, as we say, changes that must be decided by the parties in the course of negotiations, or no changes at all, as some of our Arab neighbors demand—that is something that has to be negotiated.

I do not think that President Carter, by calling what he believed to be minor adjustments, has specified what sort of adjustments they should be. Because minor adjustments to one person might mean one thing and to another person another thing. For us it is not a question of trying to grab territory or trying to stay in territory. For us it's a question of making those territorial changes that are needed to assure our security. And I believe that on this we do not have disagreement with the president.

On the question of the Palestinians. As with President Carter, and before President Carter, we have indicated that that must be an ingredient of the final settlement of the dispute between Israel and the Arabs. We do not believe that there could be an overall lasting peace unless a settlement is made of the Palestinian question. The

question is how. And on this we believe there are certain things that, if done, will be detrimental to Israel and, I also believe, to the interests of other Arab countries in the area. There are other realistic approaches in solving the situation.

Before you stop me I'll say to you with regard to Carter's phrase of "homeland": He specifically said the following day that he preferred this to be in conjunction with Jordan.

No, I think that's inaccurate. His phrase is that he conceives of such a homeland in the context "of Jordan or by some other means." So he clearly has something else in mind as a possibility.

Why, because he said "or"?

"Or by some other means." Besides, you and I both know that a Palestinian state is an option being considered by the American Government.

What you and I know, this is a matter for us to discuss in a minute. The president said a Palestinian homeland in the framework of Jordan or in other means. By this you draw the conclusion that he definitely had other means in mind. I think you have to take back the statement because he did not rule out the possibility, but he did not definitely say by other means.

I think he does have other options, and that's why he said "by other means."

Yes, he doesn't foreclose the other options. But you can't say that if he says preferably by Jordan or by other means that he doesn't consider the option of Jordan. You know, we are talking about what the president said. You might have different opinions, which I respect, or do not respect, but it is your opinion, and you should not take such a distinguished partner as the president of the United States and make him a partner to your opinion just because you happen to favor them over the other options.

Mr. Ambassador, with all due respect, after talking with officials of the United States administration I do not think you have accurately summarized the options the United States is considering.

First of all, I haven't summarized the options of the U.S. Second, you will believe me that I also talk to American officials. If you want to discuss what some officials told you, I will discuss what some officials told me. One important official said it publicly, that a homeland doesn't have political connotations. He said it, a statement. Maybe you are deciding that this is not an important official, or you do not like this declaration, but he said it. That was Dr. Brzezinski. He said it to the press. I hope you will not succeed in convincing him to change his mind. But that's what he said.

In fact, Dr. Brzezinski in late 1975, as you might remember, specifically came out for a Palestinian state, which would be ruled by the PLO.

In 1975 Dr. Brzezinski was not the head of the National Security Council. And the president of the

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United States also said other things when he was not the president of the United States. So, I mean either we are talking about official statements or we are talking about the opinions people had at various times of their lives.

You've focused on the quality of peace and the nature of peace. I want to jump right into that question because that seems to me the central issue between Israel and the Arabs at this point. I want to quote what President Sadat said to a group of journalists on April 6 and I want to ask you what your differences are with this conception of what you could discuss at Geneva: "You must have misunderstood my saying that peace will be postponed for the next generation. I didn't say at all it will be postponed for the next generation. I am for full peace, permanent peace, and then everything will be normalized. For instance, the issue of the boycott automatically will be finished because whenever we sign the peace agreement everything is going to be normalized. For instance, now Israeli cargo passes the Suez Canal. But after the peace agreement, sure, the Israeli ships can pass the Suez Canal because we have solved the whole problem." He also went on to say that "when we sign this agreement, then it is O.K." for there to be an exchange of journalists between Egypt and Israel.

With this statement I believe President Sadat has opened up the kind of dimensions—maybe not enough, but at least the kind of dimensions—that you've been asking for. What specific differences do you have with this conception of how you can begin to define a peaceful relationship?

I have two difficulties with this answer. First of all, unfortunately, later during his visit here in Washington, when specifically asked what does he mean by normali-

zation, he said no more than cessation of the state of belligerency. And therefore I simply do not think he has in his mind what normalization—or at least he did not disclose—not to us and, on the basis of my conversations with high American officials, not to them—what the ingredients of normalization are. It could be that he has shown some opening and some preparedness to discuss them—that we would welcome very much. But obviously we would not be able to satisfy ourselves with general statements that all these things or some of these things can be discussed. We have to find out what they are.

At the present stage the only—based on my conversations with the American officials who spoke to him—the only opening they saw in Sadat's approaches to the question are two: That he did not say any more that it must be accomplished within a generation and that he understands his narrow definition of a mere cessation of belligerency is not sufficient. So, obviously, if Sadat will accept the definition of President Carter on what peace ought to be—even in your quotation those ingredients are not included—then we would have a meaningful change of the position of Egypt on this point.

You don't think that offering three specifics—an end to the boycott, Israeli ships being able to pass freely through the Suez Canal, and Israeli journalists being able to go to Egypt—are a beginning of the kinds of concessions you are looking for?

I say that if this is what he really means—I don't know....

It is what he said.

But he said other things following this quotation. I do not know whether this is what he really thinks, because, unfortunately, he has said subsequently the opposite things, and these things, of course, are not the full



Simcha Dinitz, left, with Mark Bruzonsky

picture. If he would begin to think in these terms and augment them, then it would be an important thing.

I told you I had a question from Ambassador Ghorbal that was volunteered, I did not request it. I want to quote him specifically: "We go now for the full peace, the total peace, which, when it gets to be established, then like any peace between countries that have had a state of war for a long time it brings them into an atmosphere of normalization. Normalization leads to what could be expected between two states that have normal conditions between them. What is impossible today may not be impossible tomorrow. I certainly would want to ask the question to my counterpart, Simcha Dinitz; here it is: The Egyptians are committing themselves not only to full peace, but beyond full peace to what the full peace will lead to in terms of normalization. I would like to hear from the Israelis, from Simcha Dinitz, that they commit themselves equally vis-à-vis their own obligations about withdrawal, and about the existence of a Palestinian-Arab state side by side, living in peace and harmony with the Israeli state. I would like an equal commitment in the same kind of language."

The same kind of language it wouldn't be difficult for me to give because it's absolutely vague. But in terms of a concrete answer, with all due respect to my colleague Ambassador Ghorbal, I think this dialogue would be more effective if he allowed it to be direct. If Mr. Ghorbal can ask these questions of me, either publicly or privately, I think we would go somewhere. I think it would be as important as any of the ingredients of normalization. But....

When the Ambassador says he's for full peace, total peace, normal peace, the kind of normal conditions that exist between states, I think we have something more than just a vague statement.

No, because for him "full peace" and "total peace" is cessation of hostilities—because he tells you here that he is prepared to go beyond full peace. So that means that for him full peace is merely an end of state of war. But he's prepared, if you read it very carefully, beyond the full peace to think in terms of normalization. When we sit and negotiate and he outlines for us what are the ingredients of normalization that he's prepared to go, we will outline for him what are the territorial adjustments that we are prepared to make. At the present time he shows intentions. We also show—I show very good intentions: Israel is prepared to withdraw substantially from the territories that we hold at the present time as a result of negotiations for a full and meaningful peace, with all the ingredients thereof.

I gave Ambassador Ghorbal this analogy, that not too long ago in history there was a confrontation between Germany and France, where the two countries were constantly at war and had no normal relations. I asked him if he could conceive that relations between the Arab world and Israel, and specifically between Egypt and Israel, could follow the patterns that have been achieved between France and Germany. He

responded, Yes, that that was a good example, in fact, of what normalization is. Now I may be wrong—other people may interpret it differently—but it does seem to me that we are getting the kind of definitions of normalization that are worth discussing. And somehow I hear from you that they are not really offering anything more than an end to the state of belligerency.

At the present time, yes. But that they are worth discussing, definitely yes. So I don't understand what we are really arguing about. So that you will understand that I am not inventing, let me offer an exchange between President Sadat and Barbara Walters from the sixth of April on ABC News. *President Sadat*: "I am for full peace, but not the interpretation of Israel for full peace. My definition of peace is this. Let us end the state of belligerency. Let Israel have whatever guarantees she asks for from whatever body she agrees to. We shall not oppose even to the extent of a defense pact with the U.S. We shall not oppose it."

Barbara Walters: "This is very important, Mr. President, because President Carter, when talking about full peace, seemed to be speaking of the same kind of peace Israel did. What about diplomatic relations, exchange of students, exchange of tourists, exchange of journalists? Will that be part of peace?"

President Sadat: "This is not at all. I mean, an argument about full peace, as I told you, it is imposing conditions—they are old Israeli conditions that they could not even impose after '56, or after their very glorious victory in '67 they couldn't impose these conditions on us."

Barbara Walters: "Mr. President, in a press conference you talked about normalization of relations. It may very well be interpreted that by normalization of relations you mean full diplomatic relations, exchange of students, etc."

President Sadat: "For me myself, on my part, I have no objections at all. But let's be practical. The climate is not ready."

Barbara Walters: "But you said that after Geneva it would be. And then came the question, Mr. President, are you talking about full normalization, and you said you were."

President Sadat: "Yes for sure, when I say full normalization it means that the state of belligerency that has prevailed since the creation of Israel, for twenty-nine years until this moment, will end."

I don't know whether I have to read Sadat of that quote or Ghorbal of yesterday or what Sadat said here in Washington. When we sit and talk we will find out from him exactly what he's prepared to do. And therefore I don't understand what is the purpose of our discussing here what is discussable or not. Everything is discussable. We will sit, in answer to my colleague the ambassador, we will find out what they mean in terms of peace, and they will find out from us what we mean in terms of boundaries and in terms of a Palestinian solution.

There's one other element in discussing peace. The question of Zionism. Are, in fact, the Arabs prepared to live with the Zionist Jewish State of Israel? I asked

Ambassador Ghorbal about this and he said: "As I said, we are ready for a full, complete peace with Israel. And Israel is a Jewish state. We are not quarreling with that. But not a growing, expansionist Jewish state. Yes, we will live in peace and in harmony with a Jewish state, but not with an expansionist state." What are your comments?

Zionism never was a policy of expansionism, and Israel never was an expansionist state. Israel has fought wars of survival that were launched on it since 1948 by the Arabs. We have committed a great sin. We won these wars. And we have transferred the war to the enemy territory. For this we don't need to apologize. If the Arabs are prepared to make peace, we will make peace on agreed borders. But there is not a question that Israel ever expanded in the past, and Israel has no ambitions to expand in the future.

Do you not have parties in Israel, in fact a number of major parties, that advocate the retention of the entire West Bank? And could not this be considered an expansionist tendency in Zionism?

It could be considered a party platform of certain political parties. There are some parties—unfortunately not parties, because there isn't a democracy in the Arab world—who would say to you that they don't want the very vestige of a Jewish state anywhere in the Middle East. Just yesterday I read a statement from a prominent Saudi representative, who said that it is ridiculous to believe that we can have peace with any segment of Israel.

Who was that Saudi?

I can find that quote for you.* Today I saw a statement from a Libyan representative that our struggle would continue until the last inch of Israel's existence in any part of Palestine will remain. You have the PLO talking about the elimination of Israel by stages. So, I mean, you're telling me that there are some parties in Israel that want to retain the West Bank. First of all, this is not a sign of expansionism because they have not expanded in the West Bank because they wanted to take it. It was Menachem Begin in the cabinet of Levi Eshkol who joined in a statement to Hussein, on the first day of the '67 war, that if you don't move, nothing will happen to you. So that doesn't exactly show signs of expansionism. But, on the other hand, you have in the Arab world still today, within the Arab countries bordering Israel and other Arab countries, those who demand the complete annihilation and elimination of every vestige of Jewish independence.

What major Arab leader supports the policy you just stated? What important Arab leaders support that policy?

I don't know if you think Qaddafi is important or not important. He just endowed a chair at Georgetown University.

In addition to Qaddafi?

I said Qaddafi is one example, and I think that Assad still does not talk about acquiescence to an independent

Jewish state in Israel. He has said that Syria is not obliged to recognize Israel or to have peace with it even if Israel goes back to the '67 lines. The leaders of Iraq are another example. In fact, Sadat talks about recognizing Israel as a fact but does not talk, so far, about a full, meaningful peace with Israel.

Sadat's ambassador is now on record as having talked about that. If in fact that is their policy, then do you consider that a major change?

As I said, if this is their policy and it will be expressed in the various ingredients during the course of negotiations, I will consider it a very important change. I've said it three times, but I'm prepared to say it four times.

I want to talk about U.S.-Israel relations. You've been the ambassador for Israel since the Yom Kippur War and through the period we call the "reassessment" of American Middle East policy. Many people would say that Jimmy Carter, in fact, represents the continuance of this reassessment. Many people would also say there are strains in the U.S.-Israel relationship. Last year, as an example of these strains, a broad cross section of political people issued what was called "the Brookings Report." In this report two major differences with Israeli policy were outlined. The Brookings Report called for, as President Carter has called for, first, minor changes in the 1967 boundaries. And, second, it called for Palestinian self-determination.**

A second example of the strains is George Ball's lead article in our most important journal of foreign affairs, which appeared in April. In this article George Ball says that the strain is so great that only an imposed settlement can be a proper policy for the U.S., and that he further believes that unless the U.S. takes the initiative to impose a settlement, the parties themselves will never reach one. In view of these

* Ambassador Dinitz later indicated that he was referring to Crown Prince Fahd, who has stated that his country will not agree to any policy not approved by the PLO. And the PLO, Dinitz further indicated, calls for the elimination of Israel.—MAB

**The Brookings Report referred to is entitled *Toward Peace in the Middle East*. It was published in 1975 by the Brookings Institution. The members of the study group that prepared the report—each acting in his or her personal capacity—included Morroe Berger of Princeton University, Robert R. Bowie of Harvard University, Zbigniew Brzezinski of Columbia University, John C. Campbell of the Council on Foreign Relations, Najeeb Halaby, a New York attorney, Rita Hauser, attorney, Roger W. Heys of the American Council on Education, Alan Horton of the American Universities Field Staff, Malcolm Kerr of UCLA, Fred Khouri of Villanova University, Philip Klutznick of Klutznick Investments, William Quandt of the University of Pennsylvania, Nadav Safran of Harvard University, Stephen Spiegel of UCLA, A.L. Udovitch of Princeton University, and Charles W. Yost of the Brookings Institution. The affiliations are those of the participants at the time the report was published. (For discussion of the report see Mark Bruzonsky, "U.S.-Israel Policies: Reading the Signs for '77," *Worldview*, September, 1966.)—Ed.

developments what is your assessment of the condition of U.S.-Israel relations?

Sometimes I am more fascinated by your introduction to the question than the question itself. Because you are making certain sweeping suppositions. You are not questioning me but are asserting *them*. I doubt whether President Carter would agree to define his present policies as a continuation of the reassessment.

My second response is to the presentation of your question, saying there is a strain in America-Israel relations. My answer to this is that there is no strain in America-Israel relations. We work very closely and very intimately with the United States. We do not have agreement on every subject under the sun. But we do have basic agreement on both strategy and tactics, and therefore I cannot accept the assertions you made regarding the strain of relationship.

Third, to illustrate the strain you have brought in Mr. George Ball, who is known to be a protagonist of the Arab cause. I disagree with his thesis as expressed in the article he wrote in *Foreign Affairs* magazine, and in many articles he wrote before, on two or three basic grounds. First of all, I do not believe that for peace to be durable it can be imposed. I don't think either we or the Arabs are children, that peace must be conceived and imposed upon them by others. I'm happy to see this is also not the position of the U.S., and George Ball does not represent the position of the United States Government, to the best of my knowledge. Therefore I don't see why I should take this model as an example of strain in the relationship. On the Brookings Institution Report, this is also a private report, which I'm quite willing to comment on. The Brookings Report does not say—with all due respect to you—what you said. It does not talk about a separate Palestinian state.*

I'm sorry, I did not say that. Palestinian self-determination.

I don't have the Brookings Report in front of me. But the Brookings Report talked of two different options about how to solve the Palestinian problem. One in conjunction with Jordan and one as a separate entity. We favor the first one and reject the second one. Were there other elements, I'm quite prepared to answer them.

Yes, the Brookings Report favors a return to about the '67 borders.

The Brookings Report does not favor the return to the '67 borders.** The Brookings Report says there should be some changes or minor changes—I don't have it in front of me—but it does not talk about the '67 borders as the formula. Again, as I said to you earlier in the answer, we believe there are certain changes in the '67 lines that have to take place for the borders to be secure and for the peace to be permanent. We are quite willing and prepared to discuss these changes when we negotiate peace with our neighbors.

I wonder what your response is to this quote from the pro-Israeli *New Republic*: "The conflict between Israel and the United States could well come over just how much change is to be demanded of the PLO

before it is accepted as a party to the negotiations." Do you think that such a conflict is foreseeable, is possible?

First of all let me take exception to your adjectivization of a journal as pro-Israel or anti-Israel. There are many articles in the *New Republic* written by different people whom I disagree with. There are some I agree with. And therefore I don't think it is fair to that magazine. I think as one journalist, you, especially, should be very careful in labeling generalizations about magazines, whether they are for or against.

On the substance of the question on the PLO. There's an American position on the issue articulated every Monday and Thursday, and this is that the U.S. will not recognize, will not deal with, the PLO until the PLO accepts Resolutions 242 and 338, recognizes the existence of Israel, and changes its covenant to eliminate from it all those references to the destruction of the State of Israel. I have no indication that there is any change contemplated with this American position.

A number of Israelis—in fact, a former Secretary-General of your Labor party and a highly respected Reserve General—feel there are such indications. In fact, they've been meeting in Paris with representatives of the PLO. This group of Israelis is advocating establishment of a Palestinian state and negotiations by Israel and the PLO. How do you feel about these efforts, and how do you feel about those individuals negotiating with members of the PLO?

I feel they have a perfect right as citizens, as free citizens in a free country, to do whatever they think is right. I think what they are doing is wrong.

Do you find Mr. Eliav and Mr. Peled respectable members of the Israeli political establishment?

They are definitely not in the Israeli political establishment if you call establishment the government.

I don't mean the government. Respected Zionist Israelis?

I wouldn't try to label them with any definitions. It's up to them. I think what they are doing is probably well-intentioned, but I think they are wrong. And their right to do it is, of course, guaranteed by law. But to the best of my knowledge they have not said that they think the changes that occurred in the PLO are sufficient. But

*In its opening statement the Brookings Report includes among the elements of a fair and enduring settlement this reference to Palestine: "There should be provision for Palestinian self-determination, subject to Palestinian acceptance of the sovereignty and integrity of Israel within agreed boundaries. This might take the form either of an independent Palestine state accepting the obligations and commitments of the peace agreements or of a Palestine entity voluntarily federated with Jordan but exercising extensive political autonomy."—*Ed.*

**On boundaries the Brookings Report states: "Israel undertakes to withdraw by agreed stages to the June 5, 1967, lines with only such modifications as are mutually accepted. Boundaries will probably need to be safeguarded by demilitarized zones supervised by UN forces."—*Ed.*

why should I argue that point. I think that the whole group is mistaken. I think their whole approach is wrong. Trying to find, to attempt to reform a coalition of murderers and make them the worthwhile representatives of people—rather than doing this we should find alternate ways of dealing with the Palestinian question through the vehicle of Palestinians who have in mind how to settle women and children and not how to kill them. I think this is basically our approach to the Palestinian question and therefore to the PLO.

If before the end of the year the U.S. Government were to grant a visa for a PLO official to work in an information office in Washington, would you consider that a major development, one that called into question previous agreements between Israel and the U.S.?

I would consider it a wrong move on the part of the U.S. because it would be subject to that sort of interpretation that you are giving. I hope they will not do this.

Ambassador Ghorbal questioned the Israeli economy yesterday, and I have one question for you on it. He solved his own?

He also has major problems. It's a question concerning which country has the greatest number of problems at the moment. My understanding is that the Israeli budget at present is about 35 per cent for military purposes, and that if you add the interest of the spiraling Israeli debt the total approaches somewhere about half the budget. I believe that since the debt is mainly due to war-incurred costs, it's fair to add these two together.

Your country is receiving \$2 billion in American aid, plus aid from the Jewish communities in the U.S. and elsewhere around the world. This aid is what's required to keep your economy afloat. A number of distinguished economists in your country have stated in fact that the country is potentially bankrupt, that there's even the possibility of defaulting on the Israeli debt. Meanwhile, inflation is rampant, devaluations come monthly, the standard of living is declining, emigration seems to be going up. How long can Israel carry a burden of using 50 per cent of its national budget for purposes of war?

I think you are exaggerating a little bit, but there is no need for you to exaggerate the heavy burden of defense, because it's there. There is no pleasure in devoting 33 to 35 per cent of your Gross National Product to defense. Even the heroic people of Israel are not enjoying paying taxes. But I think they realize that as long as we are threatened by a hundred million Arabs surrounding a population of 3.5 million people, that this burden will have to be carried. How long it will be carried, as far as I am concerned, the shorter the better. But let there be no misunderstanding: If the burden will have to be carried for a long time, we will do this. Because we have no choice. We are not imposing this burden on ourselves because it's pleasant. We are imposing it because this is the only way we can insure our continued survival as long as there is no peace.

How long do you anticipate the U.S. Government will continue to supply—if my figures on this are correct—approximately 50 per cent of our grant military aid and approximately 25 per cent of our grant economic aid to one country of 3.5 million people?

Without actually entering into the question whether your figures are right or not, it is substantial economic and military aid that we get from the U.S. I think the U.S., too, will continue to support us as long as they realize that we find ourselves in this situation. Without this inducement Israel and the U.S. are doing their best to bring about the situation of peace. Among other things, so this heavy load can be dispensed with. But not only because of this. Human lives are involved. And they are even more dear than the cash grants. So I believe that with all the effort we are putting in in order to find a settlement to the dispute the U.S. will aid us, so I hope, as long as we find ourselves in the predicament in which our existence and our survival are threatened.

One further question on the PLO. The director-general of the foreign ministry, Shlomo Avineri, last year on Israeli radio indicated that "there is no reason to rule out in advance coming to an arrangement that might include a West Bank-Gaza Palestinian state." "There is no reason," he continued, "to rule out in advance, in any event, negotiations with the PLO." This may have been before he became director-general, but apparently you disagree quite vehemently that there is no reason to rule these two things out?

That is correct. And not only I, but I'm happy to see that Professor Avineri too disagrees with it, if you see some of his recent statements. A recent speech was devoted to indicating why there cannot be and ought not to be a separate Palestinian state and why the PLO cannot be the conduit by which to do it.

What has changed Dr. Avineri's views in two short years?

I think that, like every scholar, he develops and matures as he studies the situation more deeply.

You recently stated, when talking about territories, that Israel must have defensible borders and that major portions of the territories occupied in the '67 conflict would contribute to these defensible borders.

I never said "major portions" of them could contribute to these borders.

So you believe that major portions....

I said to you earlier that I believe that for true peace major portions of the territories now held by Israel could be returned. I never said that major portions of the territories would have to be incorporated. Vice versa. I said that major portions of the territories now held by Israel could be returned in peace agreement negotiations between us and the Arabs.

Then defensible borders in fact might well mean minor adjustments?

This all depends how you define minor adjustments.

The State Department defines it as limited to a small number of kilometers and not including Jerusalem.

It never defined it to us in any way. Not in minor, not in major, not in tens of kilometers and not in a few kilometers and definitely never defined it as including Jerusalem. Never did. Maybe to you, but not to us.

Where do you find political support among constituencies in the U.S. and among member nations of the U.N. for the position that Israel must have defensible borders and should not return to some approximation of the 1967 borders?

In the U.S. I find great support for it in the general public, in the labor movement, in the Congress, in some parts of the media, and even among some members of the administration. Outside the U.S. I would admit that the majority of the member nations of the U.N. do not think so. And I can also analyze at length why, but this was not the question.

Could you tell me your own views, after being here for so many years, about the reasons the U.S. and Israel have a relationship of such a special character. What is it? Is it Israel's strategic importance, Israel's democratic nature, the Holocaust? What is it that makes for such a special relationship?

I think it's a combination of several factors. First of all it is a question of kinship, which is based on similarity of moral, ethical values. I think there is a kinship between democracies. Unfortunately, the U.S. has not been blessed in recent years with too many allies that are free societies, especially not in our part of the world. Second, I think there are strategic and geopolitical interests on the part of the U.S. in a strong, safe, secure Israel. Because it is not only providing a bastion of democracy and stability in that region, I think it increases America's position and leverage in the Arab world as well. A weak Israel can very easily be a liability for the U.S., but a strong Israel is an asset for the U.S. and for its position in the Middle East. If you just view, in recent years, how the U.S. has progressed in its position in the Arab world

because of its strong ties with Israel, while other countries that have severed ties with Israel or weakened their friendship with Israel have lost their position and influence in the Arab world, I think that this by itself would be a very telling lesson.

Secretary Vance and President Carter have indicated that the U.S. is preparing what is termed "suggestions" about the kind of settlement the Arabs and Israelis might try to reach. Do you welcome these "suggestions"? Are you looking forward to these suggestions?

We always welcome suggestions between friends. What we object to is imposition. We have had suggestions in the past, and we will probably have suggestions in the future, and we will consider it in the spirit of exchange of ideas between friends. But if somebody is trying to impose—and I don't suggest the administration has this in mind—this is something we would not welcome.

In the past, when there were suggestions from the U.S. as to what a settlement would look like, it was called the Rogers Plan. There seems to be a presumption that once the U.S. goes on record with suggestions, that by the very nature of going on record; we have something more than suggestions. Don't you feel this is true?

Yes, I feel it is true, if your interpretation is true. The reason the Rogers Plan was not suggestions, but a plan, is because it was a publicly articulated plan, which is exactly the sort of thing that we would not welcome and we think will not contribute to the efforts of peace. On the other hand, suggestions have been going on throughout the course of negotiations for the last four years, since the Yom Kippur War, between Israel and the U.S. Many of them were constructive, and I am sure that this dialogue will continue between Israel and the U.S. in the future.

Thank you very much.