

**Memorandum of Conversation between US President Jimmy Carter and  
Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin  
(2 March 1979)**

Zbigniew Brzezinski Historical Materials Collection. Box 36, Folder: Serial X's (1/79-2/79). The Jimmy Carter Presidential Library



**Anwar Sadat, Jimmy Carter, and Menachem Begin at the  
signing of the Egypt-Israel Peace Treaty, March 26, 1979.  
The Jimmy Carter Presidential Library**

*Embedded in the September 17, 1978 Camp David Accords were broad outlines for an Egyptian-Israeli Peace Treaty and a Framework for Palestinian autonomy. The details of both remained to be negotiated. Yet, obstacles to implementation of the Accords appeared almost immediately. Arab states isolated and ridiculed Egypt for recognizing Israel. Jordan and the Palestinians balked at participation; neither was prepared to recognize Israel prior to withdrawal from the West Bank. Egypt and Israel could not agree on whether their treaty took precedent over other agreements Egypt had with Arab states. No progress was made in implementing Palestinian autonomy. In early 1979, the Shah of Iran, a stalwart ally of the US, Egypt, and Israel fell from power. The Shah's sudden departure left Israel without access to half of its oil supply. Begin, still unsure of US ultimate intentions for the West Bank told Carter, "we must have a guarantee that there will not be a Palestinian state...this would be a mortal danger to us. Arafat has taken over the Israeli embassy in Tehran." Carter tried to mollify Begin's fear that a Palestinian state would be established, asserting that "No one is trying to trick Israel." To prevent the Egyptian-Israeli talks from unraveling, Carter travelled to Egypt and Israel for intense negotiations with Begin and Sadat. Israel eventually received a commitment from the US to supply Israel with oil if it could not receive needed supplies from the Sinai oil fields returned to Egypt. Ultimately, Carter succeeded as a mediator because Begin and Sadat both wanted an agreement. The Egypt-Israel peace treaty was signed on the White House lawn on March 26, 1979. After it was signed, Palestinian autonomy became a non-starter and the Carter administration shifted focus toward other foreign policy and domestic issues, particularly, the coming presidential election campaign.*

*3 September 2018, Ken Stein / Jacob Zack*

SECRET/ SENSITIVE  
MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

SUBJECT: Summary of President's Meeting with Prime Minister Begin  
PARTICIPANTS: President Jimmy Carter  
Cyrus Vance, Secretary of State  
Dr. Zbigniew Brzezinski, Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs  
Alfred L. Atherton, Ambassador-at-Large  
Harold Saunders, Assistant Secretary of State, (NEA)  
Samuel V. Lewis, U.S Ambassador to Israel  
Herbert Hansell, Legal Advisor, State Dept.  
William Quandt, NSC Staff Member  
Ed Sanders, Senior Advisor to the President and the Secretary of State  
Jody Powell, Press Secretary to the President

Prime Minister Menachem Begin  
Ephraim Evron, Israeli Ambassador to the U.S  
Meir Rosenne, Legal Adviser, Ministry of Foreign Affairs  
Yehuda Blum, Ambassador to United Nations  
Ephraim Poran, Military Secretary to the Prime Minister  
Hanan Bar-on, Minister, Israeli Embassy to the U.S  
Dr. Marum Gottesman, Prime Minister's Physician  
Dan Pattir, Press Spokesman  
Yehial Kadishai, Director of the Prime Minister's Bureau  
Yehuda Avner, Special Assistant to the Prime Minister

DATE, TIME, AND PLACE March 2, 1979, 10:00 a.m - 12:40 p.m,  
The Cabinet Room

SECRET/SENSITIVE  
Classified by Z. Brzezinski  
Review on March 6, 2009  
Extended by Z. Brzezinski  
Reason for Extension: MSC 1.13(a)

**Carter:** I want to welcome you, Mr. Prime Minister. We had a productive meeting last night where we discussed strategic relations in the Middle East, threats to our joint security, the importance of Israel in the Middle East, and the benefits to the United States of a strong, independent, and democratic Israel. Our strategic interests are obvious.

Camp David opened a vista of peace and provided for Israeli security in ways that have not been possible for thirty years. This prospect of peace is important to our country. Since the Camp David agreements, we have been unsuccessful in achieving a treaty. I told the Prime Minister last night that the United States has no position on the substantive issues. There is no paragraph or sentence in the text that we want to impose on either Israel or Egypt. Anything that they agree on

we can accept. When there is a deadlock, we put forward suggestions and we will keep trying. But we have no desire to enforce an American position on either nation. I pointed out to the Prime Minister the value that we derive from our partnership, as well as our strategic interests in the entire region. We have strong and valued relations with others in the region as well, especially Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and Jordan, and these must be maintained.

We touched on some of the textual difficulties last night, but it might be worth reviewing them here. Our contribution to Israel in the context of peace would be between Israel and America, and we will have time to get into bilateral issues this weekend. My suggestion is that you outline your views, Mr. Prime Minister, and then we discuss them. Secretary Vance has been more involved in the texts than I have. Again, I want to welcome you here.

**Begin:** I am grateful to you, Mr. President, to Secretary Vance, and to your colleagues for the efforts that you have made to save our people in Tehran. This was a great service to Israel and we will not forget it. I would like to say something that I said before. I will have to quote myself from the first time that I met you in July 197 when I said that the free world was shrinking, that it was becoming an island battered by hostile winds. Since that time, the Soviets have taken over six countries: Angola, Mozambique, Ethiopia, Afghanistan, South Yemen, and now Cambodia.

Saudi Arabia is in direct danger from South Yemen. They are a rich people, but they are weak. Libya is pro-Soviet. Iraq and Syria are under Soviet influence, and the Baath parties in those two countries are coming together. There are between two and three thousand Soviet advisers in Syria. There are more Soviet tanks in Syria— 2,800 — than in Egypt which has between 2,200 and 2,400. Jordan has aligned itself with Syria and Iraq. Now we have the upheaval in Iran, and we must ask ourselves about its meaning. We see this as an awakening of Islamic fanaticism, just as there was in the Middle Ages. It could be contagious. Iraq has a majority of Shiites. Sadat has said to warn his own people about the fanaticism of the Muslim brotherhood. Sadat sees this problem and he knows what happened in Iran. It could happen in Egypt, where the poverty is such a problem. When Sadat was in, he thought of inviting me to Cairo, but he could not do it. I believe it was because he could not guarantee my security. There are nine million people in Cairo, a city full of slums and poverty. The Nile Valley is very narrow.

I told the President that the United States has only one stable ally in the Middle East, and this is Israel, whose stability is inherent because it is a democracy. This is also true of the United States, where change comes by the ballot, not the bullet.

In Iran, an army collapsed in twenty-four hours in the face of fanatical masses. The story has not reached an end in Iran. Khomeini is old, and there are many leftists and Communists. The border between Iran and the Soviet Union is the longest, except for the Soviet border with China. We should not forget the old czarist ambitions and we must be very careful. What can Israel do? I will not exaggerate, but Israel can play a role. The Israeli Army is a good instrument. It is efficient, and we have land and air forces. Israeli pilots have confronted Soviet pilots, and in 1970 we shot down five Soviet-piloted planes. We have combat experience. We can manage any threats against Israel.

I have suggested that you take over the two air bases and that they not be turned over to the

Egyptians for Etzion. They could be most vital for the protection of Saudi Arabia. You would not have to send F-15s to Saudi Arabia if you have an air base at Etzion. We are prepared to give you that base, but Sadat apparently is not. Israel should do whatever is necessary to prevent Saudi Arabia from being taken over by Communism. We cannot lose Saudi oil to Communism. I would like to note that we used to ask for arms in order to defend Israel, but we have now reached the end of this thesis. From now on we will contend that Israel should be able to fulfill the common interests of the free world. This is the situation as we see it, and we hope that you will look at it carefully. The world is in turmoil and the Soviets are taking over by proxy.

Now I will turn to the negotiations with Egypt. It is my duty to say as a free man, and I am speaking frankly, that the negotiations are in a state of deep crisis. We reached an agreement at Camp David and we want to be true and faithful to that agreement, both in spirit and in letter. We accepted a draft of a treaty on November 11th, and the Cabinet decided that we would sign that treaty on November 21st. We gave up serious reservations that we have on parts of the preamble. Secretary Vance urged us not to reopen the text of the treaty. Then in Cairo they found a way to reopen the text of the treaty indirectly through interpretive notes on agreed minutes. In my opinion, there is no difference in how one reopens the treaty, through the texts or through notes. It means reopening the text because it changes the content. Now let me turn to the main issues.

First the good news. The Government of Israel has accepted the American proposal on Article 4 (the Prime Minister reads the text of the interpretive note to Article 4).

**Carter:** That is the text that Israel wanted, and now Egypt has accepted it.

**Begin:** It says nothing about a review in five years.

First I will deal with Article 6. The delegation of Israel was presented with the following proposal by the American delegation at Camp David. This refers to the second paragraph of Article 6. (The Prime Minister reads paragraph two of the text). The note concerning the fifth paragraph of Article 6 provides for the unique priority of the United Nations Charter and does not acknowledge "any other priority". Now for the analysis. (The Prime Minister reads Article 6, paragraph 2 in its entirety). If we were to accept this note, I would say that we would be interpreting away the content of Article 6 paragraph 2. The words which say that the treaty is concluded in the context of a "comprehensive peace settlement" would mean that peace must be achieved between Israel and Syria, Israel and Jordan, Israel and Lebanon, and autonomy must be established in Samaria, and Gaza. Israel wants this comprehensive peace. Israel does not want a separate peace. If there is a separate peace, then there is still hostility on the north-eastern front. They have 5,600 tanks there, and 1,000 combat planes. Israel does want a comprehensive peace settlement, but it is not up to Israel or Egypt alone to reach this. Sadat cannot persuade Assad. He cannot bring Jordan to the table. This is beyond his control. So what can happen? Israel will sign a treaty and we will withdraw. But these words would allow Sadat or his successor to say legitimately that if there is no comprehensive peace. Egypt can take back its ambassador or can declare that parts of the treaty are null and void. Is absolutely clear that this would be the meaning of this interpretive note.

The second sentence of the interpretive note is even more serious and dangerous, although the first is bad enough. Article 103 of the U.N Charter is referred to and this establishes unique priority, but the note goes on to say there is "no other priority". If we were to accept this, then this would automatically give priority to Egypt's obligations to the Arabs over its commitments in the treaty. Egypt agreed with all of the Arab states in 1950, through the Arab League, that Israel is an implacable enemy and entered into a defense relationship. Egypt has an alliance with Iraq and Syria, dating back to 1962. The aim of that treaty is the liberation of Palestine, which means the destruction of Israel. Most important is the defense treaty with Syria from November 1966, which was invoked in 1967 and again in 1973 against us.

When we say there is no other priority, and we know of these other pacts, then this means that they in fact have priority. This is a rule of international law. Let me quote from the Law of Treaties by McNeil. "If Country C is aware of an earlier inconsistent treaty between A and B, he contracts a treaty with the at his own risk". If we do not say that the Israeli-Egyptian treaty must prevail, then we are acknowledging the validity of those other obligations. (The Prime Minister quotes from Lauterpacht to the effect that the treaty is null and void if it conflicts with a prior treaty). This means that at any time Egypt could join a war against Israel. If we have a war on our northeastern front, we will be able to defeat our enemies, but we will do so by counterattacking. We cannot defend ourselves from Tel Aviv. We will take the war to the other side. If we counterattack in self-defense, Damascus, Egypt may call this Israeli aggression. Egypt is able to carry out its commitments to Syria. I am not boasting when I say that we may get within ten kilometers Damascus. We will never initiate a war, but if Israel is attacked, we will counterattack. Egypt could then join the war, and the peace treaty would be null and void.

These proposals are totally unacceptable to Israel. We had a letter from Mr. Hansell which has now been nullified by this minute. It should be nullified. That also gave Egypt the means to attack Israel. There shall be no interpretive notes to Article 6, neither for paragraph 2 nor for paragraph 5. A Cabinet decision was made before I left. We will not sign any so-called peace treaty unless Article 6 stands as it is. There can be no interpretation. This is the heart of the peace treaty. We cannot be derelict in our duty. Israel has been attacked five times, and each time Israel has been branded the aggressor. Israel wants to be sure that the treaty will not be nullified suddenly because a comprehensive peace has not been achieved.

Now let me turn to the question of the letter on the West Bank and Gaza. The draft of the letter that our delegation received at Camp David contains deviations from and contradictions with the Camp David agreement. We want to fulfill the Camp David accords faithfully and completely. I signed those agreements for Israel, but I cannot agree to deviations. Here is the list of deviations. First, there is a proposal to distinguish between Judea and Samaria on the one hand, and Gaza on the other. Where is this written in the Camp David agreements? There is no difference there.

**Carter:** Do you object to the concept of dividing the two?

**Begin:** The Camp David agreements talk about a single autonomy for Judea, Samaria, and the Gaza District. This is my preference. We may talk of a difference, but in writing we must stick to the Camp David accords.

Second, it is written that Egypt will assume Jordan's role. Where is this in Camp David? Did we ever agree that Egypt would assume Jordan's role? The Camp David accords say that Jordan and Israel shall negotiate for the self-governing authority or administrative council. It has become clear that Jordan will not join the process. So Israel said that it would negotiate with Egypt alone. Let me explain. We had the right to say that until Jordan joins there would be no such talks. It is vital to have Jordan along with Egypt. Egypt has no role in Judea and Samaria, and was only in occupation of Gaza because of an illegal act of aggression which gave Egypt no rights there. Egypt has nothing at all to do in Judea and Samaria. Nonetheless we undertook to negotiate Egypt on the modalities, the powers and responsibilities of the administrative council in Judea, Samaria and Gaza. We did this to prove that there was no Israeli intention to avoid negotiations if Jordan stayed out of the talks. We wanted to banish this idea, and to show our goodwill. So we are prepared to negotiate with Egypt alone. This is our concession, which we can give and we can take back. We are not obliged to do it under the Camp David Agreements. We can wait for Jordan.

**Carter:** In the Camp David Accords, it said that Egypt would assume the Arab role.

**Begin:** It only said that in a letter, not in the Camp David Agreements.

**Carter:** All of the letters were discussed at Camp David. We never heard before of an Israeli objection to that letter. We heard that Dayan would prefer a reference to Egypt taking the Jordanian role, rather than the Arab role.

**Vance:** Khalil, Dayan, and I talked about this recently at Camp David. Dayan said he preferred a reference to Jordan's role instead of an Arab role, whereas Khalil preferred to talk about the Arab role. Dayan said that reference to Jordan's role was reasonable and he would refer this to the Cabinet.

**Begin:** On behalf of the Cabinet, I say this is unacceptable. It is preposterous that Egypt can take on the Arab role, and Egypt cannot take the Jordanian role either.

**Carter:** This was a common agreement at Camp David. I heard no objection there.

**Begin:** We made our concession to show that we are serious about autonomy. So we will negotiate with Egypt alone.

**Rosenne:** Five letters were signed September 27th. President Sadat never signed a letter dealing with the language on Judea and Samaria. Some of the letters were unilateral, as was Sadat's letter on the Arab role.

**Carter:** I know. But there was no disagreement that Egypt would negotiate on behalf of the other Arabs. Israel raised no objection at the time.

**Begin:** You got my letter on the Palestinian Arabs, and I got your acknowledgment. Egypt is now asking for liaison officers. This is a third deviation from Camp David. In those accords it only speaks of the local police forces. This means that there should be one liaison officer from

each state, not only an Egyptian liaison officer, but also an Israeli liaison officer too. We are not talking about Egyptian liaison officers in the Gaza Strip.

The fourth problem concerns the target date. There is no mention in Camp David of a one-year target date. Let me explain the problem. We talked about this at Kennedy Airport. At that time, Foreign Minister Dayan said that he favored a target date, but I opposed it on the spot. I took it to the Cabinet, and there a unanimous decision was made which included the Foreign Minister Dayan. The Cabinet decided that we will not accept a target date. Let me give my reason. To have autonomy, you need to have electors, candidates, and you need to insure that no Palestinian State will arise. People go to Judea and Samaria and tell the Arabs that they should take autonomy as a first step, and later they will have a Palestinian state. We know this from reliable sources. If we thought a Palestinian State could arise from autonomy, we would never have agreed. At Camp David, you proposed the word self-governing authority. We accepted, but we added "administrative council", not a legislative council. A legislative council can declare independence, but an administrative council cannot. If the administrative council one day proclaims a Palestinian state, we will arrest them. But we don't want to arrest a legislative council. That is what the Bolsheviks did and we are not Bolsheviks. The administrative council will have 11 members, but it is not to declare independence. After five years, as I told you, Mr. President, we will claim our sovereignty and others may claim their sovereignty. If that happens, then the autonomy will go on. We will never agree to refer to the self-governing authority without mentioning the administrative council.

Let me explain why we do not want a target date. We must have a guarantee that there will not be a Palestinian state first. This would be a mortal danger to us. Arafat has taken over the Israeli Embassy in Tehran. There have been meetings in Nablus, the ancient town of Shec'hem. Thousands of people showed up and there was a proclamation that the Arabs should liberate Jerusalem and Jaffa. In such circumstances, we cannot accept the idea of a target date. As that date approaches, the PLO will use its Kalashinkovs to intimidate the population.

After Mr. Saunders met with the Palestinians in Judea and Samaria, we had to guard them to protect their lives. We cannot set a target date, because then there would be no candidates and no electors. It should be possible to introduce autonomy within six months, but it might take as long as two years. This is a question of life or death to Israel. We shall leave all of Sinai. But in seven hours the Egyptian army can be at our southern border. If the PLO takes over in the east, they will be on the mountains with their Soviet weapons, and we will be in the valley with only eight miles between us. All of our children will be within range of their guns, and all our airfields will be closed, because of their fire. This would be a mortal danger to Israel. It would be peril to the free world if there were a Palestinian state that became a Soviet base in this area. The PLO sent arms to Khomeini. There would be Soviet generals in Bethlehem. Does this free world need a Soviet base in Judea and Samaria? With all due respect, this would not be wise, it would be a grave danger. Israel must have iron-clad guarantees that there will be no Palestinian state. You have said that there should not be a Palestinian state in your public remarks. But some people advise that autonomy is just a first step, so any target date is impossible. I understood from our talk last night that you might consider the phrase "as expeditiously as possible" as a substitute.

**Carter:** I was also talking about that as the formulation on the timing of the exchange of

ambassadors.

**Begin:** I'll come to that. We have prepared a counter draft of the letter. We propose using this phrase "as expeditiously as possible". This is as far as we can go. Egypt has suggested that autonomy might first be established in Gaza. They also talk of Egypt assuming the Jordanian role. The transitional period of five years would start from the time of Gaza's autonomy. This was not agreed at Camp David and it is not written. This is a contradiction to Camp David.

The letter also talks of the two Camp David Agreements being attached to this letter. I have not agreed to this. This is a novelty to me. The letter as now written talks about the self-governing authority with full autonomy for the West Bank and Gaza. This is a complete deviation from the Camp David framework. We are not talking about autonomy for or to the West Bank and Gaza, but only for the inhabitants. It is written so. (Mr. Rosenne reads from the Camp David Framework.)

These are two worlds apart. If the self-governing authority provides full autonomy to the West Bank, this means that the territory has full autonomy, and Israel will have no right to be there. But we do have that right, because this is the Land of Israel. We suggest that the inhabitants have full autonomy and this is the way it is written in the Camp David Agreements. It should be this way in the draft letter.

For several weeks, in our drafts we suggested that the negotiations should deal with the modalities of elections, the powers and responsibilities, and "other related issues". Why was this latter phrase deleted? It is important to us. The Camp David Agreements talked about security for Israel in the transitional period and beyond. This is what we meant by "other related issues". We are concerned about security beyond the transitional period. These words were deleted. These are my remarks. We cannot accept these proposals. We have prepared counterproposals for you to study. I would like to sum up my observations. We have agreed on Article 4. Article 6 must stand without any notes. We have rephrased the letter and we ask that you study it. Now I want to raise the question of oil.

We have a commitment from you from 1975 on oil. Recently you were asked at a press conference and you said that you would honor this commitment. Israel has been prudent and diversified its sources of oil even before the Shah fell. The Shah had already hinted that he might withhold oil from Israel in some circumstances and we could not afford to rely on one man. Israel provides a bridge for oil from Iran through our pipeline, but now that pipeline is dry. We used to get 60 percent of our oil from Iran and now that is lost. We have looked for other sources, such as Mexico, Indonesia, and others who might surprise you. We have not turned to the United States. Oil to Israel is not wasted. But if we have no oil, then our planes cannot move and we will be in deadly danger. This is a matter of life and death

There is oil in the area of Sinai from which we will withdraw. Israel currently gets 1.6 million tons from those wells. In six months this will be up to 2.5 million tons. I want a commitment from Sadat in writing that we will be to purchase 3.5 million tons of oil out of the 8 to 9 million tons we use annually. I also am asking you to give an American guarantee to the Egyptian commitment. If Egypt will not give such a commitment, we shall proceed to evacuate Sinai in

the context of the peace treaty, but we will not give up the oil wells. And I will say so to Sadat. This is a matter of life and death. The Camp David Agreement was signed when the Shah was still a ruler. We are asking for no favors. We will pay the market price. We are giving back to Egypt the oil wells which we developed, but we need a commitment from them in return.

On the question of ambassadors, Sadat agreed to normalization of relations. If he reopens the Annex dealing with the exchange of ambassadors, we will also reopen the question of the timing of withdrawal, and we may change the time of the interim withdrawal from nine to eighteen months or the time of the final withdrawal from three to six years. If there is a reopening, it should be done on both sides.

**Carter:** I want Secretary Vance to respond to your comments on the letter, but I have some remarks to make.

**Vance:** Let me say one word. The President has indicated that we are trying to help the parties reach agreement. We have been asked to make suggestions. That has been our role. On the specifics, the letter does offer the possibility of making a distinction between the West Bank and Gaza. The suggestion was made that it might be easier to establish self-government in Gaza first. This was discussed among the three ministers at Camp David. Dayan said that the Cabinet had not made a decision on this, but that it was an interesting idea. He said that he would take it back to the Cabinet, and this was the basis for why we developed such a proposal.

**Begin:** But Dayan told you that he would agree to this provided that Sadat would not have anything to do with the negotiations on autonomy in Judea and Samaria.

**Evron:** We were, of course, not present, but Dayan told us that if an agreement is made on Gaza separately, then he would recommend that Egypt should have no role in the negotiations on Judea and Samaria.

**Begin:** I have his cable.

**Vance:** I don't recall it that way. Concerning Jordan's role, the suggestion was made by the Egyptians at the first Camp David meeting that Egypt should assume the Arab role in the negotiations. Dayan objected to this, and one of us suggested that Egypt could assume the Jordanian role. There was no Israeli objection and that is the reason it is there.

**Begin:** This was ad referendum to the Cabinet.

**Vance:** We were trying to draft a letter so that the Cabinet could consider it. On the question of Egyptian liaison officers, which was also discussed, Dayan said that it would have to be taken to the Cabinet. He said that it was an interesting idea in the context of the first Gaza option. It would help to bring about early elections. This was fully discussed.

**Rosenne:** From the second day of the Blair House talks, the Egyptians raised the possibility in all of their proposals of operating Gaza from the West Bank. They said that there should be an Egyptian police force and Egyptian liaison officers. This was rejected by the Israeli delegation.

The idea of officers was raised again. This is in the seventh draft, although the Israelis have not gotten copies of all the drafts. Reporters were sent by Dayan after each of the meetings, and it is clear on this question of liaison officer that Dayan rejected the idea in discussions. If we look at the Camp David Agreements, there was a difference concerning liaison and local police forces.

**Vance:** The idea of liaison officers has been in every draft. Dayan did point out that the idea of liaison officers from the start of the negotiations was new, and he said that it should be discussed in the Cabinet.

**Evron:** All I can say is that when Dayan met with us he said that we should stick to the Camp David language and we suggest using Camp David language on the question of liaison.

**Begin:** The Cabinet has read the draft letter and took a position against Egyptian liaison officers in Gaza.

**Carter:** I have talked to Sadat....

**Begin:** We accept the Camp David Accords.

**Carter:** I have talked to Sadat about the idea of separating from the Bank. He thinks that this could help break the present deadlock and might encourage the Palestinians in Gaza to participate. Egypt and Israel could use their influence. This sounds reasonable to me. There could be 1, 2, 3, 5, or 10 officers. These officers were not be present to govern in Gaza, or to work against Israeli interests, but to help carry out the Camp David agreements. They would not constitute any threat against Israel.

**Vance:** They would be there to be helpful.

**Carter:** We still think that this could be a useful idea.

**Begin:** This is not my idea. Egypt has nothing to do with Gaza.

**Carter:** They will be part of the negotiations.

**Begin:** We can discuss Dayan's idea. If we deal only with Gaza, and if Egypt drops all interests in the question of autonomy in Judea and Samaria, then we can consider this.

**Carter:** You talk of Egypt intervening in Judea and Samaria, but we agreed at Camp David that Sadat would negotiate if Jordan did not join the talks. This was discussed by us. You never objected to Sadat representing Arab interests.

**Begin:** I never agreed. I only said Israel was ready to negotiate with Egypt alone, if Jordan does not join. This was to show our good faith.

**Carter:** I agree. What is the difference?

**Begin:** We did not agree that Egypt will replace Jordan. Egypt cannot make peace for Jordan.

**Carter:** When Sadat sent a letter concerning the Arab role, you made no objection. Sadat is not trying to intervene in the West Bank. He is trying to help the negotiations.

**Begin:** This is a genuine misunderstanding. I have not given any commitment.

**Carter:** You have a right to object.

**Vance:** We never suggested that the self-governing authority could declare independence.

**Begin:** You should write that it is an administrative council.

**Vance:** That can be added.

**Evron:** In one draft, the words administrative and council were included, and then they were dropped.

**Vance:** This is not a big problem.

**Rosenne:** The Prime Minister objects to dropping administrative council and he objects to the reference to full autonomy for the self-governing authority. Camp David talks about full autonomy only for the inhabitants. The self-governing authority does not have autonomy.

**Vance:** What is the difference?

**Rosenne:** We should refer to the administrative council and the goal of autonomy for the inhabitants. The powers of the administrative council have to be established. When you say the self-governing authority should have full autonomy, this makes it appear as if the self-governing authority can make major decisions. There is no reference to a self-governing authority with full autonomy. We should stick to the language of Camp David.

**Carter:** (Reading from the Camp David agreements on the self-governing authority.) There is no reason not to use this language.

**Vance:** “In order to provide full autonomy” ...

**Begin:** “To the inhabitants.”

**Rosenne:** The idea of autonomy for the West Bank and Gaza is a different concept.

**Begin:** This is completely different.

**Carter:** No one is trying to trick Israel by slipping in a word here or there. We are not scheming against Israel; we are not trying to hurt you; and neither is Sadat.

**Begin:** I never suspected such a thing.

**Carter:** When there are doubts, let's stick to the Camp David language.

**Begin:** I speak for a brave nation surrounded by enemies. I cannot commit the sin of dereliction of duties.

**Vance:** The question concerning the target date has been discussed before. We never suggested that the self-governing authority could declare its independence. The idea of setting a goal or target was to give an impetus to the negotiations to encourage the Palestinians to participate. It is only a goal, not a fixed state. This seemed to be a positive idea, not a source of danger. We previously said that the end of 1979 should be the goal, but you objected. So now, we have tried new language on completing the negotiations in one year.

**Carter:** We originally talked of three or six months.

**Vance:** Then we talked of six or nine months, and then the end of 1979. You turned all of that down.

**Begin:** Even if you suggest one year or three years, I cannot accept. This would be most detrimental to the idea of autonomy.

**Vance:** We also changed the language so that we are talking of making preparations so that the elections can be held. We are trying to meet your concerns. You talked about the transitional period beginning in Gaza first.

**Carter:** At Camp David, there was an agreement that we proceed on the Sinai and on the other Camp David agreements. Egypt's concern is that all negotiations have been about

Sinai, and there has been nothing on the other agreement. At Camp David, we set a three-month goal for achieving an Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty. It was realized that the Egyptian-Israeli agreement was a first step. It is obvious to you and to me that we missed the three-month goal. Sadat originally wanted a fixed goal for the establishment of the self-government before withdrawal had been carried out in Sinai. Now he will accept a target date. In his message to you when he raised the question of Gaza.

First, he said that if the Palestinians or others refused to participate, Israel would not be held responsible. There has to be some element of tooth faith on both sides. We, taking into account as every possibility for abrogation of the peace treaty, feel that he made major concessions to achieve a goal. He won't hold Israel responsible if others fail. You have apparently discounted Sadat's message and are afraid that he will use the idea of a target date as an excuse to break the peace treaty. I don't believe that Sadat wants that.

**Begin:** I remember President Sadat's letter. I sent you a copy of my reply. We have had experience. We decided on a target date for the treaty negotiations at Camp David. When that date passed, Israel was then blamed for the failure. The target date was not met. The Egyptians

and other blamed us. Israel should not be in a position to have to justify herself. Israel is blamed even though Israel was ready to sign the treaty. But this is not the only issue. The target date will be a stumbling block to the autonomy. Don't forget the PLO, their Kalashnikovs, and their ability to intimidate the population. We cannot guard everyone. The PLO is a reality in Judea and Samaria. They will not let autonomy be introduced. If we set a target date, it will be dangerous. I contend that we should take the Camp David Agreement as it is. There were three parts to the Camp David Agreement: an Egypt-Israel Treaty; autonomy for Judea and Samaria; and an invitation to others to join the negotiations. We should follow the same sequence. There should be a treaty, then autonomy, then an invitation to others. There should be no target date, and we should simply write "as expeditiously as possible."

**Carter:** Do you see any interrelationship among these three elements?

**Begin:** That is a very dangerous phrase. At Camp David we heard the phrase "interrelationship", but we also heard the word "unconditional," and then it was all right. But it is very characteristic. I told my colleagues the word interrelationship would remain, but we would hear no more of the question of unconditionally. That is a fact. If we can say that there is an interrelationship but do not say that it is unconditional, then the treaty would depend on carrying out the autonomy, so the treaty could be annulled.

**Carter:** If we report the results of these talks to Sadat and there can be no further progress on the treaty, would you be willing to negotiate on the autonomy before concluding the treaty with Egypt?

**Begin:** I cannot give an improvised reply, but I can suggest that we not accept this. We are not committed to do this by Camp David. We should not begin with the autonomy.

**Carter:** Camp David says nothing about the sequence, as far as I can see.

**Begin:** It is not a coincidence that we decided to start with the treaty.

**Carter:** We are looking at the possibility, at the probability, that a Sinai agreement cannot be achieved. If that happens, rather than ending the process and going back to animosity, would you consider shifting to negotiations on the West Bank? Sadat is concerned that Israel does not intend to go forward with autonomy for the West Bank. He sees more of a possibility of progress in Gaza. If the Palestinians don't cooperate, West Bank autonomy will be difficult. Because of his influence in Gaza, and with Israel's help, there would be a better chance. Rather than have everything end, would you consider this?

**Begin:** My colleagues in the Cabinet have already raised this. I said no. The reasons are serious. The majority of the Cabinet rejected this approach. We have to negotiate with Egypt, but we cannot predict what the results of the talks on autonomy will be. Meanwhile, the great revolutionary change in the area would be the treaty between Egypt and Israel.

**Carter:** I am just looking for a way to get the Camp David Agreements moving simultaneously. This would not cancel out what we have achieved on the treaty. We would try to have both

negotiations simultaneously.

**Begin:** The way it is now written, it would be almost simultaneous. We would start the negotiations for the autonomy one month after the treaty is signed.

**Carter:** But you must see that the possibility of the entire peace process could break down. I want to avoid that.

**Begin:** I will take this idea to the Cabinet. Two of my colleagues have suggested it. I opposed it. It is not a healthy development. It is not the sequel envisaged at Camp David, but I will take it to the Cabinet.

**Carter:** It says nothing in Camp David about negotiations starting one month after the treaty. A goal was set to conclude the treat negotiations in three months and you said it could be accomplished in two.

**Begin:** I agreed to start the negotiations on autonomy one month after the treaty.

**Carter:** There is nothing in Camp David that says the treaty must precede the West Bank and Gaza negotiations. It might go a long way towards removing obstacles to the peace treaty negotiations. It could help overcome the linkage problem. This might be the only door to keep open if there is a deadlock.

**Begin:** I will tell you what I have told my colleagues. There should be no judicial linkage. The American view is that there is a political linkage.

**Carter:** That's right.

**Begin:** But I say there is no judicial linkage and there is political linkage. There is just a time linkage. We are prepared to start the negotiations on Judea, Samaria, and Gaza almost immediately. But there can be no political linkage, only a time linkage.

**Vance:** On the question of the annexed documents, there is no mystery. You had it in your own counter draft.

**Rosenne:** We met on Saturday at Camp David to talk about the agreed minutes. The draft we got on February 24th had different language in Article 6.

**Vance:** We are not talking about Article 6. I am talking about the annexed documents. This was mentioned in our first draft, and your counter draft included it.

**Rosenne:** Previous drafts had said that there would be just one annexed document. This was only the document on the autonomy. We object to having both documents annexed. When we included in our draft that both documents could be annexed, it was because there was a sentence that said that implementation of both frameworks would be independent of each other, and there was a phrase about unconditionally that was dropped, but the two documents were left. Egypt

also did not want the two documents. At least Khalil was prepared to delete the first two pages of your draft. Our position is that we object to both documents being annexed with the deletion of the phrase about independent implementation.

**Vance:** We talked about the problem of full autonomy for the inhabitants. On the question of “other related issue,” there should be no difficulty.

**Begin:** But we want it understood that this means security for Israel in the transitional period and beyond.

**Vance:** There is no problem. Let me review how we got to this point in Article 6, paragraph 5. Originally there was language stating that this treaty would “prevail over other treaties.” This was dropped. Agreement could not be reached on that. Then we reached agreement on the language in Article 6-5 on ad referendum basis. Later Foreign Minister Dayan said that this meant the Egyptian-Israeli treaty prevailed over other treaties. Once this was said, Egypt raised questions and pointed out that this was contrary to the history of the negotiations. Therefore, they asked for an interpretive note.

**Begin:** This is unacceptable to us. It interprets away what is written. What is written is that if there is conflict between the obligations under this treaty and other obligations, this treaty would be implemented and binding. This is the weakest of all the formulations, but it must be included. This note would let Egypt join any war against Israel. They would reserve their right to interpret what is aggression in the case of an Israeli war with any Arab country. This is not a matter of legal formulations.

**Rosenne:** We reached agreement with Mr. Atherton on the note of a legal opinion that would be given to the Israeli Government, but Egypt did not agree to that note. We did not see your note to them. Some thought that this could solve the problem.

**Begin:** I prefer that both letters be nullified. We should not have letters from the United States which contradict each other. The letter to Israel is contradictory to the letter offered to Egypt. The United States should be careful not to do this. This is my advice as a friend.

**Carter:** They are not in contradiction.

**Vance:** I would not sign such letters.

**Begin:** It is better to forget both letters. Egypt should hear that the letter you gave them is null.

**Vance:** In paragraph 2 of Article 6, an attempt was made to find language to indicate that all of this is part of the search for a comprehensive peace. This was not made to nullify this treaty or to give any party a right to do so. The language that is there does not do this.

**Rosenne:** In our second meeting at Camp David, different language was put forward. The draft now presented is identical to the December 13 Egyptian proposal. It was unacceptable to us then.

**Vance:** I have been trying to find a way to help. I have been breaking my back doing so. We made changes in this draft, and you rejected all of them. So I came back to this draft, and you rejected all of them. So I came back to this draft without making any special reference to paragraph 2 of Article 6. I thought this might help. I have run out of ways to help. You have rejected everything.

**Begin:** We are grateful to you, but this language cannot be accepted by Israel. It is written that this treaty is in the context of the Camp David Frameworks and a comprehensive peace. Mr. Baz will one day advise the Egyptian ruler to abrogate the treaty unless a comprehensive peace has been achieved. You can be sure of this.

**Blum:** Article 31 of the Geneva Convention would allow Mr. Baz to make such a legitimate interpretation.

**Vance:** We tried to use the language of the Vienna Convention, but you rejected it.

**Begin:** This is the first time that I have ever heard that something Mr. Baz said might be legitimate.

**Carter:** Will you agree to delete Article 6 entirely?

**Begin:** No! It is the soul and the heart of the peace treaty. (The Prime Minister quotes the language of Article 6). If Syria does not join in the comprehensive peace, the treaty must still stand. If this Article is deleted, it would cancel the peace treaty. If I may quote Dr. Kissinger in this room, he used to say that what Israel is being asked to give is tangible, and what the Arabs promise is intangible. Egypt gives us a peace treaty and recognition and for that we should not be thankful.

They should have done this in 1948. This is what Sadat gives us, plus an ambassador who can be recalled. In return we give him Sinai, two wonderful air bases, and our settlements. This represents the greatest sacrifice ever made for peace. If Article 6 is not left in the treaty, then the treaty stands on whether the rulers in Damascus will make peace or not. If Article 6, paragraph 5, is weakened, Egypt could go to war at any time. This article must stand as it is. It is the soul of the peace treaty.

**Carter:** Let me close by saying that we will meet again on Sunday. I suggest that we each get together with our own sides to discuss these issues.

**Begin:** We can meet again on Saturday night.

**Carter:** We can decide on our next meeting at a later time. Before closing, I want to say that we have talked today a lot about words and technicalities. You seem to be assuming that Egypt is looking for written excuses to attack Israel. This is the same fear that you had two or three years ago, but there have been changes since then. Prime Minister Rabin told me the first time I met him that Israel wanted direct negotiations, diplomatic recognition, and a recognition by Egypt of Israel's security needs. Israel has achieved all of those things now.

We have an interest in a relationship with Israel, and it is to our mutual advantage, because it enhances stability in the region. We also have an interest in good relations with Egypt, Saudi Arabia and Jordan, as well as others who want to see Israel strengthened. If there is no peace, if there is a reversion, and if the Arab world turns totally hostile, then our help to Israel will be seen as a threat to Egypt. We lived with that in the past, and we can go back to that again. You know the dominant role that Egypt can play in the Arab world. Egypt needs a stable relationship with Israel, obviously. Saudi Arabia needs stability in the Middle East. I don't believe that there is a direct threat to Israel in the near future, not for the next five, eight, or ten years. At the least, the threat will not come from the military forces of Egypt, even combined with Jordan and Syria. Israel can defend herself and would be able to punish anyone who threatens her. This alone should be able to deter war. But because of Iran, radical elements in the Middle East may be encouraged. I know for a fact that the major restraint on PLO activity has been the influence of Egypt and the benign influence of Saudi Arabia. They cannot fully control the PLO. I know about the bombs that go off in Israel, but an Egypt-Israel accommodation would be a major stabilizing factor and a restraint on radicalism, dissention, and revolutionary Palestinian groups.

Sadat has never spent any time with me talking of an Israeli attack on Egypt. But the major topic here today has been the idea that Egypt will attack Israel. Sadat has proven that he wants peace for Egypt, not just a temporary truce. There is no way to guarantee what will happen when we are all gone. I hope while you and Sadat are in office that the treaty can be completed. It will open up the way for a new Egyptian-Israeli relationship that will display the advantages of peace to everyone: the advantages of trade, cultural exchange, economic exchange, the beneficial influences of Israeli technology, and the example of democracy. This help reduces the risks of war. At present, Egypt has a more benign relationship with Israel than it does with Syria. After the treaty is signed, the euphoria of Sadat's visit to Jerusalem and of the Camp David agreements will be restored. This can evolve into permanent Egyptian-Israeli ties. I have never heard Sadat threaten Israel or try to break off the negotiations. He has negotiated in good faith, as have you.

There was a change when the two of you exchanged visits. We all agreed to work for a comprehensive settlement. You are afraid that Egypt will renege on its treaty commitments, and Egypt fears that you will not carry out the West Bank/ Gaza agreement. Neither of these fears is warranted. We want to avoid a hardening of positions by either of you. We cannot lose this opportunity. You expressed my views yesterday when you said that talks were in a "deep crisis". We are all concerned. Where do we go from here? This is very serious. If you show no flexibility, then Sadat will not accept the agreement. If he shows no flexibility, you won't accept. I would then see no reason for more negotiations. We hope you will try to maintain the spirit of Camp David and search for accommodation. Let us make the final attempt today to put together some new ideas.

I hope you won't reject the idea of negotiations on the West Bank and Gaza, or maybe on Gaza alone, rather than dropping everything. You know Hussein's views on going to the Security Council. Others favor a return to Geneva. Sadat could withdraw from contacts and go back to the Arab world where he would have support from the militant Arabs. I want to avoid this. To be frank, the language differences to me are relatively inconsequential compared to what has been achieved, and they are in some cases very minor. If you assume that Sadat does not want peace,

that assumption may take on very great significance. If Egypt were to totally accept your views, Egypt could still allege you broke your word and then could go to war. That could be suicidal for Egypt, because of Israel's military capability. It is hard to imagine that's happening. But that possibility can't be overcome by a mere change in language. The whole effort could be abandoned. We want to avoid this.

**Begin:** I want to clarify one misunderstanding. I have said that Egypt is looking for an excuse to make war against Israel. I tried to explain that we cannot sign any document which legitimizes a revoking of the peace treaty or making war on Israel. The peace treaty with Article 6 could be broken. I have read history and I know that treaties are torn up. I remember the neutrality of Belgium. I know that this may happen and we must all take risks. In Sinai, even with the demilitarized zone, there would be no resistance if Egypt decided to send its army back to our border. Israel needs three days to mobilize reserves and then Israel can fight everyone. If there is surprise, there would be a high cost. Egypt is building tunnels underneath the Suez Canal. Why? Israel has taken all of the risks so far. But Israel will not openly sign a treaty that would legitimize a war against her.

**Carter:** That would be a completely unwarranted interpretation of the current drafts.

**Begin:** I am sorry, but that is our view. We are responsible for the lives of our people. We need arms, not American soldiers. We need to be careful. There is a red line that we cannot cross. We cannot legitimize an attack from a country that signs a peace treaty with us. If there is a breach in the peace treaty, we will fight. President Sadat gave me a pledge of "no war", but that is not real peace. If he breaks his pledge, Israel will fight its way across the Suez Canal. But Israel cannot knowingly sign a treaty which would give legitimacy to an attack on her or to an abrogation of the treaty. To say that Israel is adamant after all the concessions that we have made, the removal of settlements and all of that, is unfair. When I went home after Camp David, I read that if the settlement question was not resolved that Camp David would be null and void I took a stand and I made the sacrifice for the treaty. I will bear the pain of this to my grave. It is the most painful decision I have made since my days in the underground. I will go visit the settlers in Sinai. They have made the desert blossom. Now we must uproot them, 3,000 of them. How can there be charges of adamancy against Israel? Our only compensation is that we may get a real peace treaty but we can't cross the red line.

**Brzezinski:** As I see it, the dilemma is as follows. For you any language in Article 6 that does not fully meet your needs is inadequate, because it may legitimize the use of force against you. The very need for Article 6 requires the most binding of language from your point of view. By its nature, that language means that Egypt is not signing a treaty with Israel, but is also explicitly disavowing its political and military relations with other Arabs. So Sadat wants to dilute the language, which you cannot accept. I think the fact that Sadat is signing the treaty will be a fundamental breakthrough and it will cause a split between Egypt and the other Arabs. To ask him to acknowledge this publicly is too much. Not only is Sadat being asked to make peace with Israel, but he is also being asked to renounce his ties to the other Arabs. The peace treaty itself is a de facto disengagement by Egypt from the other Arabs. This is a genuine dilemma which cannot be solved by any language. It might, therefore, be better to eliminate the article entirely. That would be better than having weak language.

**Begin:** Thank you for your understanding of our point of view. There is no word in Article 6 that derogates from Egypt's commitments to the Arab world. We aren't asking for any abrogation of these commitments. The real interpretation of Article 6 is that those commitments should be able to stand, except in the case of conflict. Without this, Egypt would be able to make legitimate war against Israel.

**Brzezinski:** If there is bad language, it could be construed to legitimate war. The language that you want makes the signing of the treaty almost impossible for Sadat for political reasons. Therefore, it might be better to have no article at all.

**Begin:** I want Sadat to have a good standing in the Arab world, but we cannot sacrifice ourselves on the altar for Sadat's prestige in the Arab world.

**Rosenne:** Don't forget that the preamble already establishes in six different paragraphs a linkage to the Camp David frameworks. The linkage is there.

**Vance:** We had the concept of "prevailing over", and it has now been dropped. Each treaty stands on its own feet. That was accepted. It was Foreign Minister Dayan's statement that caused the added problems.

**Begin:** Prevailing over, supremacy over, all of that is good language. This is the weakest version, but we need at least this.

**Vance:** Would you be willing to say that this treaty does not prevail over, but stands on its own along with others.

**Begin:** No. It is not equal. The others are hostile to Israel. We need to solve the problem of what will happen in the event of conflict.

**Blum:** In Europe, it is common in treaties to abrogate principles in previous treaties that are in conflict. We have not insisted upon this.

**Vance:** You have said that this treaty should prevail over the other treaties.

**Rosenne:** We gave that language up.

**Vance:** But Dayan stated it publicly and it has not been retracted.

**Begin:** We gave up the word prevailed.

**Vance:** But you haven't said it does not prevail.

**Rosenne:** The draft at one point was titled "priority of obligations". Dayan said that only where there was conflict between these obligations and others, the terms of this treaty should be honored. Egypt's objections came later.

**Carter:** We'll work on this later today.

(At the end of the meeting Prime Minister Begin handed Secretary Vance a letter on oil.)