

Begin, Dayan Rift Widens

High-level sources in Israel and Washington reported this week that a significant rift is developing between Israeli Premier Begin and his Foreign Minister Moshe Dayan over how to react to the unprecedented peace overtures of Egyptian President Anwar Sadat.

Over the past weekend, as the Sadat trip to Israel was developing, these sources warned that Dayan and his allies in the Israeli Military would make a desperate attempt to up-end the momentum toward peace, either through toppling Begin or by moving toward war. Dayan and friends were convinced, the sources continued, that Begin was acting according to a so-called "Begin Profile" whereby the Prime Minister would jump at an opportunity to concretize a viable overall peace with the Arab states. The Dayanists' perception on the other hand, is that Israel was falling victim to an Arab propaganda trick and would find its security jeopardized by responding in an accommodating way to Arab peace moves.

Since that time, a Dayan military ally, Chief of Staff Mordechai Gur, has publicly warned Israel's population against "excessive enthusiasm" over Sadat's trip and has insisted that Egypt is really engaged in a deception while planning to launch a new war. Gur was strongly reprimanded by Begin's Defense Minister, Ezer Weizman, second in command of Begin's Likud Party, for having "exceeded his authority."

Precedents

From the standpoint of recent and longer term Israeli political history, the differences between Begin and Dayan should come as no surprise. Despite all the rhetoric about Begin's "fanatical intransigence" and "terrorist past," it is Begin who has attempted to define and act upon some germ-notion of Israeli national interest, while Dayan has sought to make Israel a party to an Atlanticist geopolitical chess-game.

In the 1940s — as Begin's book, *The Revolt*, makes clear — Begin was insisting upon the creation of a Jewish state that could find the way to a national policy independent of British imperial interests. Begin was, and still is, a strong-willed nationalist above all else.

Dayan by contrast was trained by the "dirty tricks" departments of British military intelligence in utopian war games against the Arabs. He rapidly evolved into the existentialist, high-risk gambler in Israel's Labour Party leadership, seeking to develop gamesmanship vis-a-vis the Arabs into a fine art — in full collaboration with financier-run intelligence networks operating out of London and New York. For instance: the "proof" for Dayan that the U.S. was a great world power was its Vietnam war, which Dayan perceived to be a testing ground for "scientific" counterinsurgency.

During this year, the differentiation has become greater. In August, Begin independently worked out his diplomatic approach to the Romanians, visiting that East Bloc country and seeking mediation efforts by Romanian President Ceausescu with the Arabs. Soon after, he publicly called for the reconvening of the Geneva conference in early October.

This policy of "bringing the Soviets back into the Mideast" was strongly criticized in private by Henry

Kissinger and by former Dayan colleagues in the Israeli Labour Party, according to a well-informed U.S. Jewish community source.

In late September, Begin and Weizman worked with U.S. government sources to arrange a ceasefire in southern Lebanon and bring to an end Israel's ground intervention into that region. Dayan, from the U.S., cabled urgent messages to Israel for the government to maintain its military presence in the South, according to British press reports the weekend of Sept. 25.

More recently, Dayan has insisted publicly that Israel should try to obtain a separate peace with Egypt in opposition to the Carter Administration's Geneva thrust. He has been publicly countermanded on this by official government spokesmen. On Nov. 4, the Israeli Foreign Ministry declared that Dayan was only "expressing his personal view" when he declared that Israel should seek an "intermediate agreement" if the Geneva process collapsed. The Ministry spokesman declared, "Israel sticks to its initial goal, namely, to concluding definitive peace treaties with its neighbors."

On Nov. 9, Dayan labeled Egypt "Israel's only worthwhile interlocutor" in peace talks. In response to this, a U.S. State Department official stressed, "Begin is more inclined to an overall settlement approach; Dayan and the Labour Party leadership like the old step-by-step."

This divergence of views became a matter of open discussion in Israel on Nov. 12, when Israel responded to Sadat's proposal that an American professor of Palestinian origin represent the Palestine Liberation Organization at Geneva. Begin called the proposal "worth considering," while the Foreign Ministry labeled it "unacceptable."

"This invitation (to Egyptian President Sadat) does not constitute any attempt to drive a wedge between the Arab states. We are prepared to conduct negotiations for the achievement of peace in the Middle East and the signature of peace treaties with all our neighbors. With each and every one of them. I think it was only natural that I invited the president of Egypt. It is the largest of the Arab states. In our conviction, there is no basis for the conflict between Egypt and ourselves. The conflict has been tragic. Superfluous. Prolonged. And this is our appeal."

—Israeli Premier Menachem Begin,
speaking before the Israeli Knesset Nov. 15

"If it would not be interpreted as an attempt to drive a wedge between the Arabs, I would offer to make a separate peace with him (Sadat). If there be a shadow of hope, the smallest crack, I would recommend that we do that."

—Israeli Foreign Minister Moshe Dayan,
Speech in Israel, Nov. . . —