

REMARKS OF SENATOR BOB DOLE
UNITED SYNAGOGUE BIENNIAL CONVENTION
CONCORD HOTEL - KIAMESHA LAKE, NEW YORK
WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 16, 1977

I appreciate the opportunity to be with you this evening. I know some of us met earlier this year in Jerusalem. Those of you who were delegates to the ZOA Convention, or who attended in some capacity and heard Prime Minister Begin speak, will recall his message directed to Egypt at that time. We were witnessing the cultivating of seeds which had been planted, and which now may bear fruit in a rather miraculous way.

BEGIN IS ARCHITECT OF PEACE

President Carter has been saying for months that now was the most opportune moment for a settlement in the Middle East. He was right ... for the wrong reasons -- for reasons which had little to do with the U.S. initiative aimed at forcing Israel and her adversaries to an untimely meeting at Geneva.

The principal reasons that peace in the Middle East have become a real possibility are because Menahem Begin was elected Prime Minister in the face of U.S. and Arab calculations that he would not be elected; that he was able very quickly to win the broad support of the Israeli people, contrary to press speculation here that he would fail to do so; that he has been able to establish a strong working majority in the Knesset, contrary to official speculation here that he could not; and, that he has adopted a line toward the Arab states which is conciliatory on issues which affect their vital national interests, and which is unyielding insofar as their territorial ambitions are affected.

THE WEST BANK IS ISRAELI

The bellwether issue, which has muddied Middle East diplomacy for ten years, has been the disposition of the West Bank.

After the Six Day War, Israel agreed to give up the West Bank in exchange for a peace agreement. I cannot speak for the wisdom of such a proposal. All nations, Israel not least, have an inherent right to live in peace. From the beginning, Israel has been denied that right. She is the aggrieved party in the dispute. Israel also has both an historical claim and a legal right to the West Bank. The fact that the West Bank was taken by force and held by force for nineteen years in no way diminished Israel's claim. And so it seems to me at least questionable why Israel should have offered then, or should be called upon now, to give up her claim to the West Bank -- in order to be permitted to enjoy the right to live in peace.

It may be that the government of Israel will elect to relinquish its control over some part of the West Bank. As I have said previously, that is her right -- not her obligation. I believe we should support her absolutely in the exercise of that right. That is the answer to the question of settlements on the West Bank.

WEST BANK SETTLEMENTS, NOT AGGRESSION

There have been suggestions that the establishment of settlements are a calculated insult to President Carter. That is either an intentional misreading or a genuine misreading of what is taking place there today. I don't know which is worse. There would be settlements regardless of the quality or content of Prime Minister Begin's relations with President Carter. One has nothing to do with the other. The demonstration of good faith toward President Carter does not, and cannot be construed to, require Israel to forego its sovereign rights -- among them the right of its people to settle on their own land.

The settlements, as anyone who has ever visited the West Bank can confirm, are an act of faith -- not an act of aggression. The history of the redemption of land in Israel is one of Jews paying exorbitant prices for land that nobody else wanted anyway, and then loving the land back to life.

If that is aggression, if that is a calculated insult, then we ought to encourage it. It beats the standard forms of aggression by a country mile.

ISRAEL MUST BE JUDGED AND TREATED AS ALL OTHER NATIONS

Israel, frankly, has suffered from being on the losing end of a long propaganda battle because she has had the temerity to fight back when attacked, and worse than that, she has

had the audacity to win. The argument, pared to its essentials, is that Israel wants too much; not only does she want peace; but, on top of that, she wants to exist, and to exist in safety, and to be able to assure her own safety.

Stated so baldly, that proposition has the ring of a reductio ad absurdum. It happens, unfortunately, to be accurate. It is a curious judgement on Israel.

Every year, nations are admitted to the U.N. whose primary claim to nationhood is a flag and an airline, and you can't even find some of these so-called nations on a map. But no one questions their right to exist. And I certainly do not.

Yet, Israel is the only nation which is called upon again and again to justify her right to exist. The message which Menahem Begin has given, very forcefully, is that the international community will no longer be permitted to use one set of rules, one set of standards, one set of behavioral criteria for itself, and a special, unique set for Israel.

That has come as an unsettling proposition in some quarters. But it is slowly having the effect of finally convincing all parties to this conflict that there is nothing to be gained from using political, diplomatic and economic pressures to force Israel back into an untenable position where she can then be dismembered militarily.

MODERATE VS. RADICAL ARAB LEADERSHIP

This is a very compelling reality to moderate Arab leadership which seeks peace for its people, which seeks prosperity for its people, and which seeks the kind of stability in the area which is required to close the door to Russia's adventurism in that part of the world.

Unfortunately, not all Arab leadership falls in the moderate category. This is what creates the tragic paradox we see today where every step toward long-term peace increases the short-term chance of war.

We should have no illusions about the possibilities of peace. It is certainly no secret that I have very serious, fundamental differences with the Carter Administration's Mid-East Peace Plan. I think it is misnamed. It is not a peace plan. It is a plan which would seriously diminish the prospect of peace. It is based on illusions, and not on the reality of the situation in the Middle East.

ARAB NATIONS COVET OLD BRITISH MANDATE TERRITORY

The fundamental assumption of the plan is that if Israel retreated to the 1949 Armistice lines, and if a Palestinian state was established somewhere -- and you know where they have in mind -- then peace would result from that. The probability is that if the alleged irritant, the speck of sand in the eye of the Middle East -- Israel -- were to disappear tomorrow, in a very short time the area would be engulfed in the flames of war.

Ironically, Israel is the single greatest force for stability in the area. The territory of the old British Mandate -- including Israel and Jordan -- is the cockpit for Arab territorial ambitions which almost certainly could not be reconciled peacefully.

ARAB NATIONS IN CONFLICT

The inability of these nations to resolve their own differences and to co-exist in peace is not just a judgement based on historical experience, it is a reflection of contemporary events and you can follow it every day in the newspapers.

The latest upheaval is a potential war between Morocco and Algeria. Only recently, Egypt had to send troops to her western borders to battle Libya, and that was a bloody exchange. The efforts of President Sadat's predecessor, Abdel Nasser, against Yemen are a matter of record. There is constant friction between Iraq and Syria. The bloody record of assassinations and executions resulting from that conflict is there for all to examine. King Hussein has survived more assassination attempts than Idi Amin.

None of those situations take into account the PLO and other radical Palestinian groups, which increases the amount of past bloodshed and the prospect of future instability exponentially. And finally, none of this takes into account the internal circumstances of many of these nations which, under their own leadership, are insecure and intrinsically incapable of speaking for the course they may take after the next coup or the next assassination.

"COMPREHENSIVE SETTLEMENT" UNDESIRABLE AND UNATTAINABLE

Given all this, my assessment of the term comprehensive settlement, which has been given such currency by the present Administration, is that it would mean Israel would be in dire danger on three or four fronts, instead of one or two.

There are those who seek a settlement that will bring peace, and there are those who want a settlement that will improve their chances of success in another war. I would rather have a piecemeal peace which helps the antagonists get into the habit of getting along together, and which demonstrates the advantages of peace, than to have a comprehensive settlement which turns out to be another public relations gimmick that can't be sustained and that sets the groundwork for another round of war.

ARAB-JEWISH COOPERATION DEMONSTRATED IN SOUTHERN LEBANON

For now, nothing is more certain than the fact that some factions in the Middle East do not want peace, do not favor peace, and will do everything within their power to prevent peace. The experience on Israel's northern border is ample evidence of this. Israel's strong presence along the Good Fence has meant security for the Christian Arabs in Southern Lebanon, it has meant jobs, medical assistance and just plain hope. It has demonstrated that Jews and Arabs can cooperate, can work together in peace and harmony to their mutual benefit. This is the last thing that the PLO rejectionists want or can tolerate. It is an embarrassment to all those who have preached for years that the destruction of Israel is a holy obligation, and the only means of achieving peace.

To end this embarrassment and, ostensibly, to get peace talks going, the Administration pressured Israel to reduce its presence along that border. And when Israel did so, the PLO was permitted by Syria to reinfiltate the area, to attack Israel, and we have seen the tragic results of that for both sides.

The conclusion that must be drawn is that a strong Israeli presence prevented killing, and the withdrawal of Israeli forces permitted killing.

SADAT CAN BREAK THE CYCLE OF WAR

I want to believe, and I hope I am right, that Anwar Sadat is one of those who wants peace now, for its own sake and forever. He has shown that he is a man who is willing to take enormous risks. I believe his initiative toward Israel is the greatest risk of his career. It may produce the beginnings of a process toward a settlement between Jordan and Israel which might then encourage an accommodation between Syria and Israel. Or it may produce another tragic round of assassinations. I pray for his success.

I mean that sincerely. Today's world often suggests to us that cynicism is the better part of wisdom, and even those who are not cynics are at least confirmed sceptics. Where I come from, it is not considered bad manners to look at a horse's teeth before you buy him. It's just common sense. It is common sense to cut the cards when you sit down with the architect of the Yom Kippur War.

SADAT MEETS THE TEST OF SINCERITY

But having said all that, we still have to acknowledge that President Sadat's diplomacy suggests a radical and courageous departure from common practice. He is the first leader of stature to relinquish Israel as a valuable whipping boy, and to suggest that his people have more to gain from peace than from war, or from protracted preparation for war. It has been the habit of leadership there to blame their failings, and the unhappy lot of their people, on Israel.

By his actions, Anwar Sadat is sacrificing the traditional gilt-edged excuse for governmental failures in the Middle East. I think that is a token of sincere intent on which we must rely.

THE BEGINNINGS OF PEACE

It would be nice if the events of the next few days should result in Anwar Sadat and the man who has been unjustly branded a terrorist -- Menahem Begin -- going to Stockholm next year to receive the Nobel Peace Prize. I hope it happens. The beginnings of peace in the Middle East would be a prize in which the whole world could share equally and gratefully.

The beginnings of peace in the Middle East could mark the beginning of the end of a renewed opportunity for aggression by the Soviet Union. The reintroduction of the Soviet Union into the Middle East equation has been the single most troublesome blunder in U.S. international relations in recent memory.