

Personal Notes on the Camp David Summit by William B. Quandt

September 5, 1978. Tuesday.

President Sadat and Prime Minister Begin arrived separately at Camp David in the mid-afternoon. That evening President Carter had his first serious discussion with Prime Minister Begin. It lasted over two hours, and Begin's primary concern was the situation in Lebanon. He asked the President to send a personal message to President Asad of Syria about the Lebanese situation, which the President agreed to do. The message was sent the following day.

At dinner that night the Egyptian and Israeli delegations encountered one another for the first time. [Some observations on the odd behavior of Deputy Prime minister Tuhamy.] ... Shortly after Tuhamy left, the Israeli delegation arrived with Dayan, Weizman, and others briefly greeting the Egyptians. When Dayan and his colleagues went off to the far table, Weizman broke from that group and came over to talk to the Egyptians at greater length. This was the first real breaking of the ice between the two sides. It seemed as if Dayan did not much appreciate the fact that Weizman had taken the initiative to befriend the Egyptians.

September 6, 1978. Wednesday.

The President met alone this morning with Sadat for nearly two hours. **Sadat explained to the President that he intended to present a new proposal, consisting of an eleven-page document entitled "Framework for the Comprehensive Peace Settlement of the Middle East Problem."**¹

Early in the afternoon the President met briefly with Begin to inform him that Sadat would be presenting a new Egyptian proposal. He urged the prime minister to reflect on the document before giving a detailed reaction.

At 3:00 p.m., Carter, Sadat and Begin met together for the first time. Sadat read out his proposal sentence by sentence, and Begin listened and refrained from making any detailed comments, reserving his right to do so the following day. **Begin was apparently taken aback by the content of the document, which he saw as a hardening of the Egyptian position.** The President tried to calm Begin down and reassure him. He is aware that Sadat and Begin have very little trust in one another, and feels it is important to try to build up some mutual respect between the two men. He believes that this is a prerequisite for effective talks at this stage.

After dinner the American delegation met with Secretary Vance and Dr. Brzezinski for a review of developments during the day and a discussion of the Egyptian proposal. President Carter joined the discussion for about two hours, and he seemed thoughtful and sensitive. The President wanted to understand in detail the Egyptian proposal before making suggestions for changes.

¹ The text can be found in William B. Quandt, Camp David: Peacemaking and Politics, Washington D.C: The Brookings Institution, 1986, appendix D.

September 7, 1978. Thursday.

The President, joined by Vance and Brzezinski, met with Begin, Dayan and Weizman this morning to hear their first detailed reactions to the Egyptian proposal. At 10:30 a.m., the President and Begin left that meeting to join President Sadat for the second of their trilateral discussions. That meeting last three hours and fifteen minutes.

Begin gave a point-by-point critique of the Egyptian plan and apparently there were intense discussions and arguments with voices raised. It was a very contentious session.

Begin seemed to enjoy it, but Sadat seemed withdrawn and somewhat depressed. Dayan, Weizman, and Barak seem more relaxed about the Egyptian proposal, seeing it as an opening negotiating position, but Begin reportedly views it as a hardening of Sadat's previous views.

Some of Begin's advisers [Aharon Barak in particular] believe that he, Begin, has concluded that no agreement will be possible with this Egyptian position on the table, but that he, Begin, is now assure that he will not be blamed for the failure of the summit. He can point to the Egyptian proposal which is hard on full withdrawal and on sensitive issues such as Jerusalem and the Palestinians. He can use the Egyptian proposal to unmask the Labour Party claim that Sadat is really ready for an agreement and is prepared to show some flexibility.

While the President was meeting for the third time with Begin and Sadat alone during the afternoon, Secretary Vance met with the Israelis to discuss in detail their plans concerning the West Bank and Gaza. Vice President Mondale joined the meeting. **The Israelis have slightly modified their position concerning the decision on sovereignty in the West Bank and Gaza, now stating that it will be decided after five years.** There was also considerable discussion of the question of how the self-governing council will acquire its authority. Sovereignty was also discussed in detail as were settlements.

Secretary Vance said our view was that there should be a freeze on the number of settlements and on the number of people in settlements. The Secretary suggested a formula whereby there would be no new settlements or expansion of existing settlements without the approval of the four parties who would be negotiating questions involving the West Bank and Gaza. **From his discussions it appeared as if the settlement question would be among the most difficult to resolve with the Israelis.**

One can begin to draw some tentative conclusions from the talks so far. First, Begin and Sadat are not speaking the same language and do not get along personally at all. This is causing concern in the Israeli delegations. **Barak approached me in the evening and pleaded with me to find some way to get the message through to the President to keep Begin and Sadat apart. He said that Begin was beginning to harden his position and was already thinking of how the summit could end in failure without his being blamed for it.**

Barak said that the time had clearly come for the Americans to put forward ideas of their own, since the Egyptian proposal was unacceptable as a basis for serious negotiations. He also urged that we pay more attention to Dayan and less to Weizman. Weizman is good on a general level, but Dayan will be the one who helps find the formulations to solve problems when the drafting begins.

By contrast with the Israelis, **the Egyptians seem more anxious to identify their positions with those of the United States than to reach any kind of agreement with Israel.** They have deliberately incorporated language used by American presidents in the past in their own proposal.

At this stage. It would seem that their [Egyptians'] preferred outcome from Camp David would be agreement between the United States and Egypt, with Israel isolated and under strong American pressure to change basic positions. The expectation is still that the talks may end this coming Sunday. The President met one last time late in the evening with President Sadat and some of his advisers.

September 8, 1978. Friday.

Secretary Vance and his colleagues met with Dayan and members of the Israeli delegation to continue the discussion on the West Bank. **The Israelis put forward another version of their position concerning the withdrawal of the military government from the West Bank and the means by which the question of sovereignty would be decided. The main change is that a decision on sovereignty will now be reached by agreement among the parties with participation of the elected representatives of the Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza. Israel notes specifically, however, that it will maintain its own claim to sovereignty in these areas.**

The American delegation also met with the Egyptians for a full discussion of their ideas on sovereignty and to listen to their concerns about the Israeli position on settlements. By now, everyone seems to agree that Begin and Sadat should not meet in the near future. There were no such meetings scheduled today. Some polarization has set in between the two delegations and they are both nervous and are looking for us to take a position. **By the end of the day it was decided that we would put forward a proposal of our own for discussion purposes.** This means a full day of drafting on Saturday.

Begin has taken a very firm position with regard to settlements. This has angered Sadat, particularly on the settlements in Sinai, and President Carter is also irritated that Begin has been so intransigent. By contrast, the Israelis are trying to find a slightly different way of dealing with the sovereignty question in the West Bank and Gaza, but that does not yet seem to change the substance of their position.

As of now, it seems as if an American proposal will be put forward on Sunday and several days will be spent in discussion it. One possible outcome would be Sadat's accepting the proposal and Begin rejecting at least parts of it or saying that he must return to Israel to consult with his Cabinet and the Knesset.

At eleven o'clock this evening, Saunders began drafting the first of twenty-three American proposals, drawing heavily on ideas that had been developed after the Leeds Conference concerning the West Bank and Gaza. The structure of the proposal will bear some resemblance to the Egyptian document, and a conscious effort will be made to include points from both the Egyptian and Israeli proposals. But the core of the draft will consist of our thoughts on how to deal with the West Bank/Gaza issues during a transitional period.

September 9, 1978. Saturday.

The American delegation spent most of the day working on a draft proposal. The first version, prepared by Saunders, was discussed in the morning with the Secretary and the full delegation. By 2:00 p.m., a revised draft had been sent to the President to get his preliminary reactions. **At 4:00 p.m., the President met with the full American delegation to discuss the draft and to make suggestions of his own. The most important of the suggestions was the addition of the word "minor" to the language on agreed modifications in the 1967 lines in the West Bank and Gaza. The President said that he wanted to do this in order to have something to bargain with in his talks with Begin. He does not expect that language to remain in the final draft, but he has told both leaders that this represents the American position and he is prepared to include it in an initial draft.** He thinks that Sadat will understand the need to remove it later, but that he can get something from Begin in return for its removal.

During the evening, further drafting took place, and near midnight a final draft was prepared for the President's consideration, with notations made in the margins to reflect likely Israeli and Egyptian reactions to the proposal.² The President wants to see this early tomorrow morning before he meets with the Israelis for the first discussion of this proposal.

Although there were no formal meetings today between Egyptians and Israelis, Weizman did meet with Sadat twice during the day. **Weizman apparently asked Sadat the following questions:**

--Can Egypt and Israel reach an agreement at Camp David that deals just with the two of them? Sadat said no.

--Weizman asked if Sadat would agree to an Israeli military presence in the West Bank and Gaza after five years. Sadat said no. (Sadat has told Carter that he agrees to the concept in general, but he will not openly agree to it as long as Begin is prime minister.)

--Weizman asked if the Yamit/Rafah area could be joined to the Gaza district. Sadat said no.

--Weizman asked if Sadat would agree to open borders and diplomatic relations and Sadat said that he would recognize Israel, but that he was not prepared for full diplomatic relations and open borders. (Again, Sadat has told us that he agrees in principle to these steps, but not while Begin is prime minister.)

--Weizman also asked if Israel could keep the Etzion airfield near Eilat. Sadat said no. But he talked of helping Israel build a new airport within Israel proper and delaying Israel's withdrawal from Etzion for a period of two years.

² For the text, see Quandt, *op. cit.*, appendix E.

Weizman was discouraged by this conversation, because he saw Sadat backing away from some of the points that had been agreed upon in their previous conversations. To some extent, Sadat is reflecting his genuine irritation with Begin's positions, but also he seems to be trying to convince the Israelis that only an American compromise proposal can be the basis for further negotiations. He is giving them no encouragement in the direct contacts that he will be forthcoming.

There was a meeting at 4:00 p.m. with the President, Secretary Vance, Dr. Brzezinski and the rest of us on the delegation. The President talked about the need to try to conclude an agreement on the Sinai while at Camp David. There should be three years for implementation of such an agreement. Everything should be accomplished while at Camp David, except for the problem of settlements. **There would be limited armaments zones in Sinai. We would not make any reference to sovereignty in the West Bank and Gaza in the general framework document.** He was beginning to think of how to solve the airfields problem in Sinai as well.

The President was very frank in saying that we should try to get an Egyptian-Israeli agreement started and concluded. He said that he hoped both agreements could move in parallel, but it was clear that the Egyptian-Israeli one took priority, and if nothing happened in the West Bank for ten years he would not really care very much. He began to refer to the possibility of side letters dealing with a number of issues; for example, on sovereignty Israel might restate its position, while Sadat and the United States would say that they saw sovereignty as residing with the inhabitants in the area. On Sinai, Sadat would make a commitment not to send his main forces beyond the passes. On the airfields, the Israelis might be able to use them for three years, and then they should be abandoned.

September 10, 1978. Sunday.

The Secretary met with the President early in the morning to give him the most recent draft of the American proposal. He returned after an hour to meet with the American delegation and to give them guidance for producing a new draft by early afternoon. Meanwhile, the President took Begin and Sadat to Gettysburg for a brief outing.

Vice President Mondale, Secretary Vance and Dr. Brzezinski met with the President shortly after the return from Gettysburg and a number of changes in the proposal were suggested at that time. **Most important was the deletion of the reference to "minor" border modifications and the inclusion instead of a version of the Vienna document, noting borders in the West Bank and Gaza should meet the aspirations of the Palestinians and the security needs of Israel. This was done primarily at Vice President Mondale's suggestion.**

At 4:00 p.m., the proposal, with these modifications, was presented to Prime Minister Begin and his colleagues. The discussion lasted about one hour and then a break was taken to allow the Israelis a more thorough discussion. The meeting resumed at 9:30 p.m., and last until 3:00 a.m. the next morning.

During the earlier session, Begin was apparently very aggressive in his critique of the American proposal, and on occasions was even rude to the President. The discussion in the evening, which last five and one-half hours, was dominated by the President, who made a strong impression on

Weizman and Dayan, but little substantive progress was made. The Israelis promised to produce suggested changes in writing early the next morning so that they could be considered before a revised version of the proposal was presented to the Egyptians.

The Egyptians were extremely nervous during the day on Sunday as they saw intensive consultations going on between the United States and Israel. They fear a joint US-Israeli document, which will then be presented to them for approval or disapproval. This is not the spirit in which the US side is consulting with the Israelis, but the Egyptians fear collusion nonetheless. The Israelis also today developed a proposal of their own entitled "Response to the Egyptian Framework Document Submitted on 6 September 1978 at Camp David." They initially intended to present it to the Egyptians, but at our urging did not do so, and there was no further discussion of this particular document. It was primarily a restatement of known Israeli positions.

September 11, 1978. Monday.

Between 8:00 and 10:30 a.m., President Carter joined the American delegation to receive the Israeli written reactions to our proposals. The Israelis would bring a few pages at a time, they would be reviewed by the President, the Secretary, the Vice President, and Dr. Brzezinski and some changes were accepted and incorporated into our revised proposal, while others were left aside. The President wanted a new proposal to discuss with Sadat at 10:30 a.m. and by the time he left to meet with Sadat a retyped version of our proposal was available.

The President then met alone for two hours with President Sadat to go over the proposal orally. We expected to have a more detailed discussion with the Egyptian delegation that evening, but during the afternoon the Egyptians, who by now realized that this was not a joint US-Israeli document, had asked for more time to study it and to develop their own suggestions. Begin is holding very firm on refusing to allow any reference to the "inadmissibility of the acquisition of territory by war."

Over lunch today, Secretary Vance discussed with Foreign Minister Dayan how it might be possible to make the Sinai negotiations more precise. It was agreed that this could be done in parallel with the discussions of the broader framework document. **Dayan now seems to understand more fully that Sadat does need some kind of general framework before he can agree to resolve the Sinai problem. This was apparently the beginning of the thought that two separate but related documents might be produced at Camp David.**

This evening, the President met with Weizman and General Tamir, presumably to discuss further the Sinai and Israeli security requirements. The Israelis have not yet seen the version of the general framework proposal given to the Egyptians, although Vance did review it quickly with Dayan without leaving him a copy. The Egyptians began to give us informal reactions to our proposal later in the evening, indicating a concern that it marked a retreat from previous American positions. Finally, the President met with Dayan and Barak -- who increasingly are seen as the most able negotiators on the Israeli side -- to discuss further the Sinai issue and the handling of the problem of settlements.

September 12, 1978. Tuesday.

The President met this morning with Sadat to get his considered reactions to the American proposal. While somewhat discouraged, Sadat was nonetheless forthcoming. **He has told the President that he will agree with whatever we propose, provided it is reasonable, but that he may have to go through the motions of fighting us on some issues first.**

Begin is holding very firm on the non-acquisition of territory by war and is taking a firm position on settlements. The best guess as of today is that Sadat will be able to sign a document along the lines of our proposal and Begin will not. He might go back home to present the document to the Knesset, recommending some points and opposing others. Sadat's advisers are concerned that he is not sufficiently attentive to the nuances of the language in the proposals and that he is giving up too much without getting anything in return. They are particularly concerned about negative Arab reactions.

We met formally with the Egyptian delegation to get its reactions, and this proved to be a rather tedious and formal session, with al-Baz, in particular, going on at excessive length about sovereignty. We finally agreed to drop the term entirely. This left a rather negative impression with some members of the American delegation and there is a feeling that when problems of this sort arise the President will deal directly with Sadat rather than trying to work things out with his advisers.

During an informal conversation today, Dayan suggested to Vance that the West Bank/Gaza general agreement should be separated from the Sinai agreement, since the latter seemed likely to break down over the settlements question. Dayan was in a generally pessimistic mood today, and was trying hard to find ways of getting around the intractable problems, implying that some limited agreement should be reach in any case.

When Vance made it clear to him that the documents could not be separated into those parts that might be agreed upon and those on which there was disagreement, Dayan shrugged and said he had tried his best and he could now see no positive outcome from the talks at Camp David. He made a comment the "history would show that his conversation with Vance had been the last chance to salvage something at Camp David, and it had not worked."

During the late afternoon, the President met with Sadat to begin to review a proposal he had developed on the Sinai. He had written this out in his own handwriting, based on his discussions with Weizman and was now anxious to get Sadat's reaction. **From this point on, the President handled the Sinai proposal very much as his own initiative.** (The President had a handwritten list of principles governing the Sinai settlement by 4:00 p.m., and was discussing it with Vance and Brzezinski and Saunders before going over these points with Sadat at 4:30 p.m.)³

Shortly after 5:00 p.m., the President met with the American delegation to report on his meeting with Sadat. He was positively impressed by Sadat's continued flexibility. He also met later in

³ For a copy of the handwritten document, see Quandt, *op. cit.*, appendix F.

the Evening with Begin, and there was still strong disagreement on the inadmissibility language and on settlements.

That evening Secretary Vance and some members of the American delegation met with Begin and his colleagues to resume discussions of the framework paper and to review the separate Sinai document as well. It is not clear that the Israelis have seen the actual text of the Sinai document, but it is being discussed at a general level.

The President has also gotten agreement from both Sadat and Begin that they will designate one member of their respective delegations to meet with the President to go over the general framework paper during the day on Wednesday. The Egyptians gave us written reactions to our general framework document at about 4:15 p.m.

September 13, 1979. Wednesday.

The President met from 8:00 a.m. to 4:50 p.m. with Barak and al-Baz for a lengthy review of the overall framework document. Barak tended to be reasonable and conciliatory, while al-Baz was more defensive and legalistic. By all accounts, the President began to show his irritation with al-Baz and began to press some of the Israeli points on him. The discussion continued from 8:00 a.m. to 10:15 p.m., with serious work being done on redrafting of certain sections. **The main achievement during the entire day seemed to be agreement to drop the specific wording on the “inadmissibility of the acquisition of territory by war” and to refer simply to Resolution 242 in all its parts and to attach the text of that resolution as an annex to the document.**

Carter was quite impressed with Barak today, and made the point that if Barak were prime minister of Israel and Sadat the president of Egypt, he would have no doubt that an agreement could be reached. Later in the evening, the President met with Begin to go over the written version of the Sinai proposal

By the end of the day, Wednesday, the Egyptian delegation was generally very discouraged. They felt that the President had taken the Israeli side too much in the discussions and that they were being asked to make too many concessions simply because the Israelis were taking intransigent positions themselves. They are clearly worried that Sadat will not take their advice seriously concerning the language of the agreement.

At the evening meeting with Begin on the Sinai document, Dayan made a strong defense that the area in Sinai along the border should not be dealt with definitively in any proposal now. It was not possible to reach agreement on the status of settlements and the airfields. The best that Israel could do would be to say that until agreement is reached on the status of this zone, the status quo should prevail.

Dayan at this point seemed quite concerned not to agree to the full withdrawal of all Israeli presence from the Sinai. He tried formulations such as “the issue of the Israeli settlements in Sinai will be discussed and resolved in a final treaty.” **Dayan wanted this to be broadened to include the status of the entire area and at one point suggested the following formulation:**

“Issues concerning this area will be discussed and decided in talks on a peace treaty and until then the status quo will prevail.”

September 14, 1978. Thursday.

The President woke this morning at about 4:15 a.m. and called Brzezinski in for a talk. The President was in a grim mood. He does not see how the talks can come to a successful conclusion given the differences between the two parties. He is worried about a negative Egyptian reaction to Begin's continued hard line on settlements and the dropping of the wording on the inadmissibility of acquisition of territory by war. **He is beginning to think that if an agreement between the two parties cannot be achieved, then the next best outcome would be for the United States and Egypt to agree on a document, which would leave Israel in opposition on some selected points. Then we would have to join in a protracted debate to bring about change in the Israeli position. The President seems to be prepared to go this route rather than lose the chance for an agreement which would tie Egypt down on some positions.**

The President met with Sadat for about one hour around 8:00 a.m. and then met with Barak. He subsequently met with Dayan, and then met with Sadat to discuss the Sinai paper. The Secretary spent much of the afternoon with Barak and al-Baz going over the general framework paper in more detail. The Israeli reactions to the Sinai proposal were also discussed with the Secretary during the day. Significant changes were made in the US proposal concerning the West Bank and Gaza.

Israeli written reactions to the Sinai proposal were also received by the evening. The Egyptians had accepted most of the new language in the American proposal, and are feeling considerably more satisfied with the document. The Israelis are being very firm on the final status of the West Bank and Gaza, on settlements, and the airfields in Sinai.

During the day Sadat apparently drew the conclusion that he would leave on Friday. It is not clear how or when he conveyed to the President his disenchantment, but both men subsequently acknowledged that there was a moment of crisis when Sadat was thinking of leaving on Friday. Presumably some of the changes in the American proposal during the day were sufficiently attractive to him so that by Thursday evening he had changed his mind.

By late afternoon, the President, who had been rather depressed all day, began to feel somewhat better when he realized that we could come out of Camp David with a fair document that Sadat would be able to agree to. The Egyptian delegations felt better today in contrast to their attitude on Wednesday. Dayan met with Sadat today and after his talk he predicted that there would be no agreement reached at Camp David.

The main changes in the American proposal during the day were on Jerusalem, where some reference was made to the need for a symbolic Arab-Muslim presence and some changes on the West Bank/Gaza formulation to make clear that the final status of these areas would be discussed at the end of five years in negotiations clearly based on Resolution

242, which we then spelled out in detail, and to the Aswan language on Palestinian self-determination. We also stated that the results of the negotiations, the peace treaty, should be submitted to a vote by the inhabitants of the area and they should be allowed to choose their own form of government subject to the limits specified in the treaty. The Israelis see this as very dangerous and potentially as leading to a Palestinian state.

September 15, 1978. Friday.

Sadat formally agreed during the day not to leave Camp David and to wait until at least Sunday. Vice President Mondale conveyed during the afternoon a handwritten letter from President Carter to both Begin and Sadat asking them to come up with their final suggestions today, and to be prepared for lengthy discussions on Saturday, and to conclude the talks on Sunday.

The President met with Dayan in the morning and then the Secretary met with Dayan and Weizman in the afternoon. **Weizman has come up with the idea that Israel might give up the airfields in Sinai if we could help build airfields in the Negev.** He discussed this with me over breakfast in the morning, in the midst of an otherwise rather pessimistic conversation. I suggested that this was a positive idea and that he ought to pursue it with Secretary Vance and the President. Vance also met with Sadat to discuss the problem of a small buffer zone on the Israeli side of the border.

I began serious drafting of a speech for the President to make on the assumption that we would not reach a complete agreement. [This was referred to as the “failure speech”, in which Carter would address a joint session of Congress to explain that we had come close to an agreement, that real progress had been made, that Egypt had shown considerable flexibility, but that two issues remained to be resolved: Israel’s unwillingness to acknowledge that the withdrawal clause of UN Resolution 242 applied to the West Bank and Gaza, as well as other territories occupied in 1967; and Israel’s unwillingness to relinquish settlements in Sinai as part of its commitment to recognize Egypt’s sovereignty over all of Sinai, and to freeze settlement activity in the West Bank and Gaza. For more detail on the speech, see Quandt, *op. cit.*, pp. 240-41.]

Barak came up with a suggestion that we try to reach agreement on the general framework, while stipulating that the peace treaty between Egypt and Israel would not be signed until the question of the settlements in Sinai had been resolved. This was the first step toward taking the settlements issue out of the agreement itself and dealing with it separately. During the day, we resolved the question of the airfields in Sinai by agreeing to help build them.

The President now strongly feels that settlements (in Sinai) remain as the key obstacle. After having tried to include some reference to an Arab or Muslim flag over east Jerusalem, the President now wants to drop that language and is also inclined to drop any reference to the Palestinians choosing their own form of government. Political considerations are clearly on his mind.

During the evening, Barak made some suggestions for new language dealing with the West Bank/Gaza issues. It shows some improvement, but it is still clear that Begin does not want to

indicate that 242 applies to the negotiations concerning the West Bank and Gaza and their final status. The main Israeli change now is that they are committing themselves to find a solution for the final status of the West Bank and Gaza by the end of the transitional period. They are also prepared to accept language on submitting the solution to a vote by the elected representatives of the inhabitants of the West Bank and Gaza. They will also agree to a formulation concerning the selection of their own form of government by the elected representatives of the West Bank and Gaza.

The Egyptians have also given us a new set of comments dealing with what they see as the continued inadequacies of our proposal, particularly concerning Jerusalem, where some members of their delegation, especially Tuhamy, are very dissatisfied. By now, we have a marked-up draft of the framework document where most paragraphs have been approved. The differences that remain concern the West Bank/Gaza and its future and increasingly we are aware that paragraph 1c is going to be a real sticky point.

Vance and Brzezinski discussed with Dayan today the possibility of a security treaty, and the Israelis indicated that they were not particularly interested. Earlier discussions with the Egyptians about the possibility of an airbase or training facility in Sinai also met with a negative reaction. We did not strongly press either of these points once it became clear that neither party was particularly interested.

By the evening of September 15, it was clear that Begin would not entirely move off his position on the settlements. Barak and some of the other Israelis were very close to wanting an agreement on the basis of the proposal we have prepared. **Weizman was saying openly that he would recommend that the settlements in Sinai be removed if this could bring peace with Egypt.** Dayan talked somewhat mysteriously about having a few ideas, but he will not discuss them with us until he has gone to the prime minister.

September 15, 1978. Saturday.

Much of the morning was spent talking with Barak and Dayan about the language in 1c. They went on at considerable length about the difficulty they would have directly accepting any reference to the final status of the West Bank and Gaza being determined by the principles of Resolution 242. They have a highly theoretical position about negotiating peace treaties only with states and that 242 only applies to states. Therefore, they can say that an Israel-Jordan peace treaty will be negotiated on the principles of 242, but they cannot say that final status of the West Bank and Gaza will be based on the principles of 242. To me, this seems to be a sophisticated way of denying the applicability of the withdrawal provision of 242 to the West Bank and Gaza and I think that Barak would admit that it is the position of Begin that he is trying to protect with his argument.

Vance responded forcefully that the Israel-Jordan peace treaty negotiation could not be dissociated from the West Bank/Gaza final-status negotiation. It was this determination of his that ultimately suggested the possibility of putting the two sets of negotiations together, and then developing two subcommittees within the framework of the overall negotiation involving Jordan and the inhabitants of the West Bank and Gaza. Then these negotiations of the whole would be

governed by the principles of 242, which we initially tried to spell out, but subsequently dropped after Carter met with Begin.

After this frustrating discussion in the morning with the Israelis, the American delegation in its entirety, with the exception of the President, met over lunch outside of Laurel Lodge. During the lunch, I began to write down a draft which would incorporate some of the ideas under discussion and I read it out to the assembled group, all of whom thought it was promising. I left at that point to work further on it and to have it typed up.⁴

After lunch, we all assembled to review this draft, and it was decided to send it to the President for his approval. He found it acceptable and later in the afternoon sent it to Prime Minister Begin and to Barak for their comments and consideration. Most of this draft became the ultimate text of paragraph 1c, with one important change – the specification of the principles of 242 which were to govern the negotiations was deleted at Israeli request.

The President and the Secretary met with Sadat and al-Baz also during the afternoon. Sadat is being difficult on the timetable for withdrawal of the settlements. He has said to the President that if Israel does not agree to withdraw all its settlements in Sinai, everything that has been agreed upon to date will be null and void. He can leave the timing somewhat open, but he cannot accept any remaining Israeli presence in Sinai. Begin is now talking about leaving this issue for the Knesset to decide. [Hamilton Jordan quote: “Begin will finesse it in the Knesset.”] Sadat is also insisting that some reference be made to the Palestinians’ right to choose their own form of government.

At about 8:00 p.m., the President began a meeting with Begin which lasted for four and one-half hours. [Vance was with Carter, and Begin had Dayan and Barak with him.] This proved to be a crucial meeting which found ways of either resolving or postponing many of the difficult issues. **Begin agreed to send us a letter saying that there would be no new settlements in the West Bank and Gaza during the negotiations, except as agreed upon. He wants this to be a three-month period, but it could be extended.**⁵ Everything in Sinai has been agreed upon

⁴ See Quandt, *op. cit.*, pp. 244-45 for more detail.

⁵ For more on what I consider to be the most serious error made by the American side at Camp David, see Quandt, *op. cit.*, pp. 247-251. The most recent account of the Camp David negotiations by a Carter administration insider is Stuart E. Eizenstat, *President Carter: The White House Years*, New York: St. Martin’s Press, 2018. Eizenstat did not participate in any of the negotiations, but he did interview many participants, including Carter, and generally provides an accurate account of the main developments. Concerning the crucial meeting between Carter and Begin on September 12-13, however, he is wrong on one important detail. On page 518 he claims that Begin finally agreed to accept that UN Resolution 242, and its withdrawal provision, did after all apply to all fronts of the conflict, including the West Bank-Gaza, although Begin argued that it did not require Israel to withdraw from all of the occupied West Bank and Gaza. This is incorrect. Begin never accepted that 242 applied to the West Bank and Gaza.

Eizenstat also mischaracterizes the argument over the length of duration on the settlement freeze in the West Bank and Gaza. He says that Begin offered a three-month freeze, keyed to the time it would take to negotiate the Egypt-Israel peace treaty, according to the Framework agreement. By contrast, Carter claimed that Begin had promised a five-year freeze. I believe this is misleading. Carter wanted the freeze on settlements to last for the period leading up to the start of the prospective negotiations between Israel and Jordan/Palestinians/Egyptians over the future of the West Bank and Gaza, a timeframe that was not specified in the Camp David Accords, but was generally believed to

now, except for the question of settlements which Begin will refer back to the Knesset for a vote within two or three weeks.

Concerning 1c, the Israelis have moved closer to agreement on the concept of one set of negotiations governed by 242, with two subcommittees. But there are still some problems that will have to be resolved tomorrow.

On Jerusalem, there will be side letters in which each party states its own position. On the airfields and Sinai, the United States will build two airfields in the Negev in order to get the Israelis to relinquish those they have in Sinai. They will have three years to get out completely.

Secretary Vance at the end of this meeting met with the staff and predicted that if we got agreement on paragraph 1c, an agreement could be signed tomorrow. There had been a good meeting with Sadat earlier in the day; he was discouraged by the weakness of paragraph 1c, and by the inadequacy of any of the suggestions on Jerusalem, but he is prepared to go along and to accept the device of an exchange of letters on some of these topics. There will be no secret understandings, and everything will be published. Sadat will also provide a letter saying that if King Hussein does not join the negotiations, he is prepared to go forward on his own.

Earlier in the day, Barak made a telling point when he said that the negotiations should have stated at the point of agreement that had been reached today. In other words, we need more time to deal effectively with the West Bank and Gaza issues. He bluntly said that if we had two more weeks we could find a real solution to the West Bank/Gaza problem. But if we only have 24 more hours we would have to find a formula that left many issues vague and unresolved. Barak made clear that he was prepared to keep on working, but he sees this as the core issue. **But in the course of the day, it was agreed to leave the issues vague and unsettled, knowing that there would be a moment of truth further down the road when some of the vagueness would have to be removed. In these negotiations, there comes a moment when one opts for clarity at the risk of reaching no agreement at all; or vagueness, which means postponing problems until a later date. On the West Bank and Gaza, we have chosen to postpone until later what cannot be solved today.**

be in the nine to twelve-month range. That would give the other Arab parties an incentive to join the negotiations without worrying that Begin would be taking unilateral acts in the West Bank and Gaza that would prejudice the eventual outcome of those negotiations. Once the negotiations began, the parties themselves would have to decide how to handle the issue of additional settlement activity, and that might mean that the freeze would go on for as long as it took to reach agreement on the final status of the territories, which might mean five years. For some reason, no one seems to have suggested a one-year freeze, with possible extensions if all the parties could reach agreement. Unfortunately, there was no U.S. notetaker present in the meeting to record exactly what was said.

Vance told me right after the meeting that Begin had agreed to a three-month freeze, but that it might be extended. I think it likely that Carter asked for the freeze to last during the period necessary to organize the negotiations on the West Bank/Gaza issues. Begin demurred, and finally said that he would give his answer in writing the next day. Carter probably understood that as his saying he would give Carter the answer that he, Carter, had been requesting the next day in writing. The mistake, then was for Carter not to react more forcefully when the letter did arrive on Sunday and it did not contain what Carter had asked for.

Sadat clearly wants an agreement with the United States, and not particularly one with Begin. But we have made it clear to him that we prefer an agreement between the two parties themselves. **The Egyptian delegation fears that Sadat has given too much away and that he will be vulnerable in the Arab world. We subsequently learned that Foreign Minister Kamel had tendered his resignation because of this concern.**

Sadat's lack of interest in detail and in language is very frustrating to his colleagues. Sadat has bargained hard on Sinai and has achieved everything he wants there, assuming that the Israelis do agree to pull out of the settlements at Yamit. Begin held firm on his basic West Bank/Gaza position and managed to get Sadat to back down on a number of key issues there and in return only gave a few symbolic positions away, such as reference to the legitimate rights of the Palestinians. **The Egyptians feel that the only big concession that they have gotten out of Begin is the removal of settlements from Sinai and a freeze on settlements in the West Bank and Gaza. Otherwise they have little with which they can sell the agreement to the rest of the Arab world. The Egyptians fear that this will be seen as a formula for a separate Egyptian-Israeli peace agreement and nothing more. It is difficult to see how Hussein can join the talks.**

September 17, 1978. Sunday.

There were still moments during the day when it seemed as if no agreement would be reached. There was a crisis over Jerusalem, which was resolved. Dayan was pessimistic early in the morning; Weizman was adamant in saying that he would resign if an agreement failed because of the settlements problem.

By mid-afternoon, the Israelis had agreed to virtually everything, except for some loose ends concerning the settlements in the West Bank and Gaza. [This turned out to be a bigger issue than we realized at the time. Begin had sent a letter saying that there would be a freeze on settlements for the three months of the negotiations for the Israel-Egypt peace treaty. Carter said this was not what had been agreed upon in his late-night meeting with Begin and asked for a corrected letter to be sent back. It arrived the next day with no changes in the text. By then the Camp David Accords had been signed].

A final meeting with Sadat in the late afternoon found him very nervous, but nonetheless prepared to go forward. About 5:00 p.m. I received a phone call from al-Baz who was in with the President and with Sadat. He asked a question about the inclusion of some language in the President's speech on the settlement of the refugee problem in accordance with appropriate UN resolutions. I asked him whether it seemed as if an agreement would be reached, and he said he thought there would be an agreement although he felt no enthusiasm for it.

I had spent most of the day on a draft speech which would be delivered before a joint session of Congress announcing the successful outcome of Camp David. We also had to work on a short Presidential statement for an East Room ceremony. Brzezinski and I also drafted letters for heads of state announcing a successful conclusion to the Camp David negotiations. It was not until after 5:00 p.m., however, that we knew an agreement was going to be reached, with some of the areas of disagreement relegated to side letters. Shortly after 6:00 p.m., we were all

assembled in the President's lodge, Aspen, and the President asked how long it would take to arrange the signing ceremony in the East Room. He was told that it would take four hours from the time he gave the order. He looked at his watch and it was approximately 6:08 p.m. He said you have my approval as of eight minutes ago.

Rafshoon and Powell pleaded for a little more time and it was decided that at 10:30 p.m. the ceremony would begin. At 10:30 p.m. sharp, President Carter, President Sadat and Prime Minister Begin entered the East Room before an assembled audience and proceeded to make statements about the Camp David summit and then to sign two framework documents, one a general document, and one dealing with Sinai. That was the first time in thirteen days that most of the participants realized the historic importance of what had been achieved.