

Stunned Arabs Prepare For War

With few exceptions, the Arab world has reacted to Menachem Begin's election victory with stunned reactions.

The leaders of Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and Syria held an emergency summit in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, immediately after the Israeli elections to formulate Arab response to Begin's victory as well as to outline policy for Prince Fahd's upcoming trip to Washington, D.C. next week.

The Egyptians are insisting that it is the U.S., not Israel, that more than ever holds the cards to what happens in the Middle East and that President Carter now has no excuse not to put pressure on the Israelis to come to terms. The Egyptians are thus begging the Administration bent on war to solve the peace — rather than to forge an alliance with anti-Atlanticist forces in Europe to block the U.S. Administration's war plans.

A Palestinian spokesman in Beirut said that there would now "definitely be an escalation of violence" and that the Arab world must prepare for another war.

The Algerian Press Service editorialized that "the terrorists are in power in Israel. This is an upheaval of

the cards which means that those Arab countries still willing to choose the American solution to reach peace will have to make increasing concessions against the Palestinians."

Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat has contacted Italian Socialist Party chairman Bettino Craxi, declaring in a letter that "the PLO is available for any contact with progressive Israeli layers, and thus we need to collaborate with the PSI." A PLO statement charged that "if Perez was a hawk, Begin is a buzzard."

In Syria, Damascus Radio commented that "the victory of the most terrorist, big-headed and extremist bloc could start a fifth war. The Syrian Foreign Minister stated that whoever won the elections made little difference, that "all Israeli leaders are the same."

In Saudi Arabia, the state radio branded Begin as "extremist," noting that "the Arabs may not be willing to negotiate with him. Talk continues that Fahd intends to pull out his deposits in Wall St. banks if the Carter Administration continues to block a Mideast settlement.

Kuwait radio broadcast that "chances of further Geneva peace talks are now very cloudy."

European Press Sees Likud Victory As 'Earthquake'

Italy

LaStampa, May 19, datelined London by Mario Ciriello, "Harsh Arab Reactions to the Israeli Electoral Results":

...The Arabs are tired of the Mideast 'crisis', of this unhealable sore which doesn't react to any of the treatments — diplomatic, military or terrorist. To understand the fears of Damascus, Cairo, Riyadh and the other capitals, one needs to understand what the Arabs aspirations are: To use the new financial and technological resources available to them to put an end to the underdevelopment of their countries. All their energies revolve around the realization of economic plans.

But how can you arrive at this goal when all roads loom up, threateningly, the two great problems — the Palestinian and the Israeli problem? Will the most brilliant economic program become impossible when an nth crisis may disturb relations with the U.S., or with the Soviets; a crisis which can impose new military expenses, can create inter-Arab tensions. One example is enough: how long will the Saudi moderation of petroleum prices last if all the 'pressures' from Carter has no effect on Begin? It would be no exaggeration to say then that oil would return to being a 'weapon' as it was for a brief time in 1973....

Britain

London Times, May 19, editorial, "They Are Gone Away Backward":

...If the gods wished perdition on the Israelis, they would drive them mad: and what more suicidal folly could they inflict on them than that of choosing leaders committed to holding on at any price to territories which their neighbours will not renounce, in defiance of the one world power on whom they depend for weapons, for financial aid, and for diplomatic support?

...There is no doubt that internationally he (Begin — ed.) would be a liability as prime minister, both because of his terrorist past and because of his simplistic, if sincerely held, views on the key issues of territories and peace. Even within Likud, while his own Herut party supports him, the Liberals would probably take a more flexible line under the right sort of pressure. But Likud has no obvious alternative leader, and given its much greater numerical strength it would hardly be ready to concede the leadership of the government to Professor Yadin.

...The victory of Likud is, *a fortiori*, a snub to those moderate Arab leaders and liable to endanger their political position in their own countries and in the Arab world at large.

...If confrontation with the new Israeli government turns out to be unavoidable, President Carter may now feel that it will at least be easier to explain to American public opinion, including many American Jews.

Daily Express, May 19, editorial, "The Tragic Choice":

The people of Israel have elected to power a political

party headed by Mr. Menachem Begin. For those who care for and respect Israel this is very grave news....

We should recall that the United States Government has grossly overplayed its hand in the pressure it has exerted upon a good friend of the West and highly civilized man, General Yitzhak Rabin. General Rabin and the Labour alliance were asked to prepare the way too publicly for withdrawal from disputed territories. Consequently, United States diplomacy now has on its hands not only a former leader of the Irgun Zvai Leumi, but an Israeli national policy which is spelt out in those three Hebrew words.

They mean 'Both sides of the Jordan.'

West Germany

Suddeutsche Zeitung, May 19, editorial by Schroeder:

...It is unusual for the Israelis to be governed by former terrorists. Corruption and the economic disintegration of

the country has led to this change, but the real factor of change was Carter.

Frankfurter Rundschau, May 19, editorial by Herbert Freeden:

Begin's victory is a political earthquake. It would not be right to put the blame (for the Labour Party defeat) on the scandals or the economic situation alone. The Labour Party had a policy of friendship with the U.S., and this policy has been crushed by the Carter Administration. It is peculiar to see that the Americans are shocked by the result of the elections since it was they who applied too much pressure to the Labour Party.

With Begin the situation is getting difficult. He considers that the West Bank must not only be administered by Israel but becomes an integral part of Israel.... The war danger has increased with this earthquake.

Who Will Rule In Israel

After 29 years of political power Israel's Labour Party has been defeated by the right-wing Likud opposition. The likely lineup of 120 seats in the new Israeli Parliament is as follows: Likud, 42; Labour, 34; Democratic Movement for Change, 14; National Religious Party, 12; Agudat Yisrael and Poale Agudat Yisrael (a small religious bloc), 5; Democratic Front (including Communists), 6; Shelli (including socialists), 2; Shlomzion, 2; Shmuel Flatto-Sharon, 1; Independent Liberal Party, 1; Citizens Rights Movement, 1; United Arab Party, 1.

Needing 61 seats to form a majority government, Likud leader and one time Irgun terrorist Menachem Begin, is regarded as likely to form a coalition with the small right-wing and religious parties. His own 42 seats plus the combined seats of the National Religious Party and the Agudat-Poale Yisrael would bring his coalition to 59 seats. More than likely, the one man parties of Flatto-Sharon and Shlomzion will also join giving him the required majority.

The Likud

The Likud party, formed in September 1973 by the organizing of Ariel Sharon, is a coalition of four parties, all "hardliners." Leading the coalition is the largest party, the Herut (Freedom) which was until recently run by half a dozen ex-Irgun operatives. This election has eliminated them from any prominent position and has brought to the fore younger right-wing technocrats like Ezer Weizmann and Professor Moshe Arens, both of whom are connected to the Israeli airforce and air industry. Weizmann founded the Israeli airforce.

Their party platform is one of free enterprise (anti-trust) and would oppose the corporate state that the Labour Party has maintained so long. While there is some differentiation among the various parties on this issue, they are all agreed that the occupied territories are "liberated" territories and they believe in "a greater Israel" concept, a maximalist approach to the occupied lands.

Ariel Sharon, while having his own party Shlomzion, is

asking Begin for a top position within the new Likud government. Sharon has many opponents within the Likud bloc and may find it more of a battle than he imagines to get accepted by the party.

His major opponents within the Likud come from the second largest faction within the party, the Liberals — General Zionists center group who are believed to exercise some moderating influence on the occupied territories issue, not opposing some concessions to the Arabs. The major spokesmen for this party are Simcha Erlich and Aryeh Dulzin who is also the treasurer of the Jewish Agency.

The Arabs Were 'Used To A Weak-Kneed Labour Party'

The following are comments from a spokesman of the American-Israeli Public Affairs Committee, closely associated with the U.S. National Security Council.

The Arabs are scared of Begin! They are used to a weak-kneed Labour Party; now they have to face someone more their equal, someone as maximalist as they are. What has happened in Israel is the same as, say, King Hussein of Jordan abdicating and naming Arafat his successor.... As a result of the elections, it could mean that there will not be a Geneva conference....

Maybe I should tell my friend Ahmed not to be so worried. The Likud is a centrist and liberal party and Begin is like Henry Jackson. Likud is not a right-wing fascist party. I don't think Israel will invade the Gulf, nor do I think Begin will do it. There will be major changes in policy.

The time table? That may be a problem. If the U.S. wants firm preparations for a Geneva conference, the way things are going now, it may never be.