

Akram Hanieh

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# **Camp David papers**

August 2000

*In a seven part series, Akram Haniya, Editor-in-Chief of the Al-Ayyam newspaper and advisor to President Yasser Arafat, tells the story of the Camp David Summit. The series gives readers an insight to the events of the Summit through a mix of detailed information on discussions that transpired in negotiating sessions, the different proposals, and the Palestinian responses. Haniya takes you to the place and places you in the midst of the picturesque retreat and the intense negotiations.*

*But most intriguing, Haniya lets you in on the private conversations between President Arafat and President Clinton. And you are invited into the thoughts, fears and triumphs of the Palestinian negotiators. Through Haniya, you are given the reasons for, and explanations of why President Arafat refused to conclude a deal at Camp David.*

*The series, written in Arabic, was published in the Al-Ayyam newspaper between July 29 and August 10.*



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## The Road to the Summit



## **The Road to the Summit**

### **July 29, 2000**

The Americans never listened to Palestinian Advice.

A month ago, Dennis Ross, the U.S. peace envoy arrived in the region a few days only before the arrival of U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright. The two, joined by members of their advisory team on the Middle East peace process, comprised mainly of State Department and White House National Security Council staff, met with Palestinian and Israeli officials. Discussions centered on the possibility of convening a trilateral summit in the United States, for the conclusion of an agreement on permanent status issues between the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) and Israel.

The Palestinian response was clear and honest. During at least two previous meetings with US envoys, President Yasser Arafat said in effect: “ Conditions are not yet ripe for holding a summit, nothing was achieved in the earlier Eilat talks,

and no progress was recorded either in the Stockholm channel talks.” He added: “ We need several more weeks of intensive negotiations before we are able to move towards convening a trilateral summit.”

At the end of a luncheon held in honor of Secretary Albright and her team at his headquarters in Ramallah, President Arafat looked at Albright and said: “Madam Secretary, if you issue an invitation to a summit, and if it gets held and fails, then this will weaken the hope among the [Palestinian] people in the possibility of achieving peace. Let us not weaken this hope.”

The Palestinian side came out from that day’s meetings with the impression that Albright had been convinced ?? of the need for better preparation prior to convening a summit, mainly by holding two more weeks of intensive negotiations in Washington between mandated members from the two parties.

Inside the meeting rooms and lobbies ???, the Americans heard during the day further advice and warnings from Palestinian officials: “The Palestinian problem is more complicated than to be simply resolved in a hastily convened summit. A summit is surely doomed to failure as long as Israel’s positions continue to be the same, and as long as there are Palestinian red lines that cannot be crossed.” Some American officials even heard from some who went as far as telling them :” Don’t get yourself into a “ New Geneva “ (The failed Geneva summit between Syrian President Hafez Assad and President Clinton, which resulted in a freeze of the Syrian track; and was considered a painful diplomatic blow for President Clinton). But the meeting Secretary Albright held that evening with Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak, added to her deliberations with her team, were more than enough for making a recommendation to President Clinton to issue invitations to a summit.

Even when President Clinton called President Arafat after Albright’s return to Washington, he made sure that Clinton heard the same advice: “Do not convene the summit yet.” He also stressed the need for prior intense preparatory talks. During that telephone call, the American President promised to confer with Ehud Barak before making a final decision. Still, President Clinton called back on the fourth of July saying that Barak had new offers he would make at a summit, and that he did not agree to hold any preparatory talks; therefore, Clinton had decided to issue invitations to a Middle East Peace Summit. During that telephone conversation, President Arafat tried three times to clarify to Bill Clinton his concerns at the expected consequences, but it seemed that the White House had decided to adopt recommendations presented earlier by Albright, Ross, and Sandy Berger (White

House National Security Advisor), and issue invitations for a trilateral summit to be held at Camp David on July 11. Quickly, the delegations were being composed, and entry visas to the United States were quickly getting stamped on passports of delegation members at U.S Consulates. The Middle East was on the verge of witnessing a new adventure in American diplomacy.

The selection of Camp David was not a coincidence. President Clinton, a Democrat, resorted to borrowing a leaf from one of the most distinguished accomplishments in the annals of American diplomacy, achieved by another Democrat, President Jimmy Carter. Carter had brought in 1978 Egyptian President Anwar Sadat and Israeli Prime Minister Menahem Begin to a summit at the Camp David Resort, that led to an agreement bearing the resort's name, and which became synonymous with the dawn of an era of changes and unrest, and of a redrawing of regional alliances.

Using Camp David was not only intended to gain from the mystique of the location and its historic importance, in fact Clinton and his aides had studied in detail the events of the 1978 summit, and called on the expertise of US diplomats who had participated in it. Also, in a country like the United States where attention is given to historic anniversaries, the selection was not far from the fact that a Washington ally, Ehud Barak, asked that the summit be held at Camp David. The Israeli Prime Minister who flew to Camp David beset by fragmentation in his government coalition and a strong opposition campaign, also wanted to remind leaders of the opposition Likud party that he was following in the footsteps of Menahem Begin, their most prestigious leader who had signed at Camp David an agreement that led to full Israeli withdrawal from Egyptian territories, and to an evacuation of Israeli settlements in the Sinai.

Still, every one of the three leaders going to Camp David (Clinton, Barak, and Arafat) had his own assessment and expectations that differed from the two others'. The American President who accepted the recommendation of Albright-Ross-Berger for convening the summit had general and personal interests. The U.S that launched the Middle East peace process through convening the Madrid Conference in 1991, now wanted to conclude the most intractable part of this process (the Palestinian track) with a final treaty. President Clinton, who is expected to leave the White House on January 20, 2001 is interested in securing a place in the history books as the leader capable of solving the longest and most difficult problem of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century.

Therefore, the time factor played an important role in the attempt to promote and obtain acceptance for convening the summit. In the US, the Republican Convention convenes on July 27 to select its candidates for the Presidential elections, followed by the Democratic Convention. US Presidents, in accordance with observed tradition, usually refrain from carrying out exceptional and attention stealing political activities during this period. After the Conventions, Presidents maneuvering room reduces further due to the run up to the November elections. According to the American expression, the President becomes a “lame duck”.

But Clinton is not just any President trying his luck in an unsafe and unpredictable political adventure. He had received from his teams at the State Department and the National Security Council assurances that even though achieving results was not easy, it was not impossible. In fact, it was possible only through a closed summit where both Israeli and Palestinian teams are placed under the tremendous pressure generated by the presence of the US President, and that would push both parties towards a comprehensive settlement.

It seemed that most of the members of the American peace team who had underestimated and rejected Palestinian advice were in fact tuning to other vibrations coming from the Israeli side. Both sides had apparently come to a joint assessment that saw a definite possibility in the conclusion of a permanent agreement that would end the Palestinian - Israeli conflict, the root of the Arab - Israeli conflict. Such an assessment was yet another proof of the short-sighted understanding of the uniqueness of the Palestinian situation, which in itself led to another short-sighted view in the attempt to recognize the components of this situation, its lessons, and also its possibilities. It looked like a strange combination of arrogance of power, an Orientalist superior attitude, and amateurish handling of politics. Some members of the American team were eager to score an achievement that could be placed in their empty job résumés prior to the arrival of a new administration. The whole issue in general looked like another standard repetition of American foolish??? diplomacy in the region: A rejection of reality, and an attempt to impose through power and pressure, structures contradicting that reality on the ground.

The Israelis, along with some in the American team, built up their analysis on the basis that the Palestinian case, as embodied by the PLO was at a very weak stage. Their assumption was that the Palestinian situation begged for an achievement represented in statehood, and for which the Palestinian leadership would most likely be willing to pay a high price. They also assumed that the Palestinian case

did not enjoy enough Arab support enabling it to withstand pressure. Further, their assumption was that an offer whereby the Palestinians got a State on most of the areas of the West Bank and Gaza Strip, wide functional authorities in Jerusalem, control of the Haram Al-Sharif, and some privileges in the Old City; coupled with exerting pressure, was guaranteed to attract the Palestinian side and sign to end the conflict and the Refugee problem, by allowing hundreds to return under a “family reunification” clause, bound by heavy Israeli security restrictions in the West Bank.

Every time the Palestinians told American officials that they were committing a terrible mistake if they assumed Yasser Arafat was willing to sign an agreement that did not satisfy minimum national Palestinian rights, the answer came in doubtful looks and smiles that claimed knowledge, self - confidence, and a confidence in achieving results. And when they were also told that the army of the current Palestinian revolution brought about by Fatah came from Diaspora refugee camps, and that any agreement that did not include a just solution to the refugee problem would become a launch pad for an even stronger revolution in the refugee camps, the answer also came in silence, that rejected even listening to anything other than what was built on their logic.

For all the above reasons, Clinton went to the Summit -based on recommendations from his aides- full of confidence in his ability to score a historic achievement that would crown his political life. Ehud Barak went to the Summit, which he was so keen on having convened after he practically stopped the Stockholm channel negotiations only after its second session. Shlomo Ben Ami, head of the Israeli negotiating side there, informed his Palestinian counterpart Abu Ala that Barak had many things to address on the various issues at hand, and that the only place where he would be willing to reveal them was at a trilateral summit in the United States. Since then, the American secret code to promote the convening of a summit became “the expected rabbits” that “Barak the magician” would pull out from his hat.

Barak, who had tried since his election to appease the Right more than the voters who elected him and brought him to power, saw that there was a great opportunity to conclude an agreement that was convenient and appropriate for Israel. An agreement acceptable to the majority in Israel, that would allow him to return triumphant from Washington. He would then top it all with a decisive victory at the polls that would relieve him and his labor party from having to deal with coalition partners whose demands would never stop.

On the other hand, Barak had already set up a “safety net” to protect him if he returned from a failed summit: He would paint himself as a hero refusing to compromise with the Palestinians, and to bow to US pressures. That would allow him to establish a base capable of attracting old partners who had deserted his government, or even bring in the Likud. Barak also assumed that convening the summit, regardless of its results, would guarantee him US and European praise for his willingness to make sacrifices for peace, that in turn would spare him any future pressures, and would give him strong ammunition in the face of a Palestinian statehood declaration on September 13.

Yasser Arafat, who has tried so hard to postpone the convening of the summit, went as far as warning in public against its definite failure, and advised President Clinton and his aides to postpone its convening for several weeks, had no choice in the end but to agree to attend when the invitation arrived. His acceptance to attend was due to several factors:

A special relationship has already been established between him and President Clinton during the past seven years. President Arafat even became the leading foreign president who had visited the White House during Clinton’s two terms in office (12 visits). On several occasions, President Clinton listened with interest to the Palestinian narrative, and a feeling prevailed that he has started to understand its different aspects. In addition, the government of Benjamin Netanyahu presented a precious gift to Arafat who had seized the opportunity to enhance Palestinian-American relations. The peak of this relationship came when President Clinton visited the Palestinian territories in 1998 and addressed the Palestine National Council, which was later seen to be the first de-facto American recognition of the Palestinian State in the making.

Such a relationship -even if it continues to be bound by the ceiling of policies set by the American political establishment- has always been considered a light of hope for the Palestinian side, the hope that Clinton would not attempt to impose what the Palestinians reject. That was exactly the assurance given to Abu Ammar before the call to the summit. Further, Yasser Arafat who has accumulated a distinguished political experience throughout decades had no desire to create a sharp disagreement with the American administration over a procedural issue such as convening a summit. He preferred to save his strength for an expected confrontation over substance.

On the night he accepted to attend the Summit, Yasser Arafat convened members



of his negotiations team in an emergency meeting in Ramallah. He presented them with an assessment of the situation and warned them to expect intransigent Israeli positions supported by some parties in the US Administration. Yasser Arafat knew very well that he was entering a tough battle. He also knew that he needed support from any party willing to extend it to him, therefore he refused an American insistence to arrive in Washington on the morning of July 10.

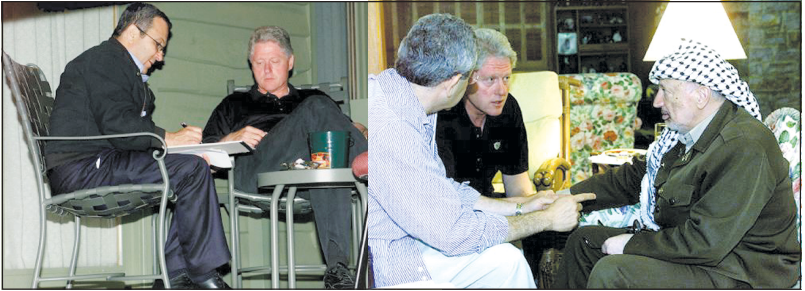
The President had other engagements: He stopped first in Alexandria for a meeting with President Mubarak, and then he traveled to Togo to participate in the African Summit since Palestine occupies an observer seat in the Organization for African Unity. At that summit, Yasser Arafat gave a speech that went over the entire path of the political process in the region. Speaking in Arabic, as he mentioned the word “ Al-Quds “ (Jerusalem), there was immediately a burst of loud applause, even before interpreters were able to translate the word to the delegates, most of whom did not speak Arabic, yet who knew very well the meaning of the word “ Al-Quds “ and its meaning to Arafat, Palestinians, Muslims, and Christians.

The echo of the loud applause remained in the mind and heart of Yasser Arafat as he left the Summit hall in the capital of Togo heading to the airport, where his plane was getting ready to take off for Washington.



## الورقة الثانية

### **The rules of the game in the Catoctin Mountains**





## **The rules of the game in the Catoclin Mountains**

### **July 31, 2000**

President Yasser Arafat and members of the Palestinian delegation arrived by helicopter at Camp David early Tuesday, July 11, from Andrew's Air Force Base where the Palestinian presidential plane coming from Togo had landed.

The darkness of night made it difficult to discern the topography of the place, and some members of the Palestinian delegation would need days before discovering that the Camp David Retreat and the cabins where they were staying, were in the middle of thick woods sitting atop a 1200 Meter high mountain range.

The presidential Retreat at Camp David is an extension of the White House. The idea of a retreat came months after the United States got involved in World War II. President Franklin Roosevelt instructed his aides to search for a retreat

in the rural areas around Washington, and to take into consideration - as the official papers of the retreat say- that it provide suitable security, ensured communication with the White House and a fresh and cool climate as an escape from Washington's stifling summer heat and killer humidity.

A site called "Hi-Catoctin" was chosen, one of three leisure camps established by the American Department of Interior in the years 1937-39. Over 40,000 dunums in the region of Catoctin Hills would be transformed into public parks. About 500,000 feet of forest wood, especially oak wood, were used to build guest houses in the parks, in an area 90 minutes away from Washington by car. Upon Roosevelt's selection of "Hi-Catoctin", two other parks were added for security reasons. There was additional construction for further buildings and facilities before its official inauguration in 1942. Roosevelt named the Retreat "Shangri-La," a name borrowed from Indian legend.

At Shangri-La, Roosevelt held secret meetings with Winston Churchill to coordinate the war effort against the Axis. In 1953, President Eisenhower re-named the retreat in honor of his grandson David, and it has been known since as Camp David. Eisenhower received there a number of leaders, most prominently, the Soviet Union's Nikita Khruchev. After this meeting, the expression "the spirit of Camp David" was born, indicating a different approach in dealing with world problems. Since then, American Presidents used the Retreat for unofficial meetings with aides, or to spend time off with family and friends. It was also the place to host world officials: Richard Nixon received eleven world leaders there, among them the Soviet Union's Leonid Brezhnev. But the Camp's claim to lasting fame came after President Jimmy Carter invited Egyptian President Sadat and Israeli Prime Minister Begin to a trilateral summit in February 1978. The summit led to the signing of an accord carrying the Camp's name, and which ushered a new beginning in the Middle East.

*In Camp David, the Americans created an unreal world, separated from the chaotic world we live in. Guests staying in the wooden cabins, spread within close proximity in the midst of a thick forest, felt like they were living in a beautiful village of extreme tranquility, to the point of boredom. The wooden cabins, which vary in size, are connected by paved trails, and trails covered with fallen tree leaves, ideal for walks. Jumping squirrels and other animals were a familiar sight, and with luck, you could even see a deer leaping from one bush to another.*

*The cabins at Camp David were named after trees and plants of the surrounding woods. President Arafat stayed at Birch, a two-room cabin with a sitting room and a small balcony. Israel's Begin stayed there during the 1978 Summit, and it was also the cabin where –as President Clinton told President Arafat – Clinton's mother stayed during her visits to the Retreat. Clinton himself stayed at the largest and grandest of the cabins, Aspen. Barak's cabin, Dogwood, was located between Birch and Aspen. Committee meetings were held at Holly. Holly was Sadat's cabin during the 1978 Summit. There is also Maple, Rosebud and Laurel, to name a few. The distance between the cabins is short, one could get around by walking a few minutes; but the preferred means of transportation were golf carts, courtesy of the United States, as well as bicycles.*

*The Camp has all the facilities imaginable: A gym, a swimming pool, tennis, basketball and volleyball courts. You can also play ping-pong, video games, or shoot pool. There is even a horseshoe ???, set up at the request of George Bush who enjoyed the Texas pastime of throwing a horseshoe around a short wooden stick. Finally, there were also large golf courses near the Camp's helipad.*

*The Camp is under the direct supervision of U.S Navy personnel, who are heavily deployed at the gates surrounding the Camp. Marines provide the security for the Camp, thus there is no need to lock your cabin door after you leave. They also carry out maintenance duties, such as mowing the grass and tending to the needs of the delegations. At Camp David you can also see the latest Hollywood films in the small movie theater. Actually, Camp David can be a suitable setting for a romantic movie. You can also borrow a movie and watch it in your cabin, which is equipped with a VCR and 70-channel TV set.*

*In this unrealistic world and ideal village, the Americans wanted to fashion*

*a new history for the Middle East. In response to the American mindset that often tends to distance itself from traditional patterns of politics, they believed that a place like Camp David created suitable conditions for hosting complicated negotiations.*

*The Americans laid down the rules of the game. The rules came in various forms to provide what they felt was in the best interest of the task at hand. The first of these was dictated by the nature of the place: There was no place here for suits and ties, which was no problem for Abu Ammar [Yasser Arafat]. The American blue jeans and T-shirts dominated. It seems that the Americans assumed that distance from formalities could break many of the barriers between negotiators.*

*Further, the nature of daily life in the “village” of Camp David, provided negotiators with a great deal of time for meeting. Meals were served at a specific time in a small restaurant. When dinner was an official affair (in the presence of the three leaders), the White House staff arranged the seating around three tables in a small hall. This allowed delegation members to mingle and chat informally. Other activities in the “village” also provided opportunities for unofficial meetings. You may meet Mrs. Albright jogging on one of the trails, you may also find Bill Clinton, or Danny Yatom, an important member of Barak’s delegation, working out on the machine next to you in the gym. The American hosts attempted to build social relations between negotiators. Albright once invited delegates to a movie. Delegates were also invited to play a basketball game; as none of the Palestinian delegates showed up, the Israelis ended up playing with the Marines.*

But the American theory of “No Ties” at Camp David 2000 would not have the same effect as in Camp David ‘78. In the first instance, members of the Egyptian and Israeli delegations did not know each other personally. In the second, most members of the Palestinian and Israeli delegations knew each other through long years of negotiations. In addition, the overlapping Palestinian and Israeli entities imposes relations that are different from relations between any other Arab and Israeli negotiators.

On the other hand, the rules of the game as identified by the Americans,



aimed at protecting the negotiations by imposing the utmost degree of media blackout. There was only one telephone for each delegation, and external calls were rarely transferred to delegation members. The only official source of information was a White House spokesman, and sometimes a State Department spokesman, who both held daily press conferences 30 minutes away from Camp David where they said nothing. Although the Israeli delegation was deliberately leaking a lot of news, most of what appeared in the Arabic, Israeli, and international press had nothing to do at all with what was in fact happening at the Camp. The two sides attempted to score points through American TV networks by sending their “heavy weights” to Washington. President Arafat sent Dr. Hanan Ashrawi to the American capital, while Barak sent the head of the Knesset, and his Absorption Minister to take part in numerous television debates to win over the American public opinion. Ashrawi scored good points in these debates.

Palestinian and Israeli legal advisors and experts stayed at the buildings where press conferences were being held. These buildings belong to the American Federal Emergency Board and are used for training volunteer fire brigades. Two or three of these experts were allowed to travel daily to Camp David to meet with their delegations. But they were banned from touring the Retreat, and had to return to their residence at a certain time. It is worth mentioning that the team of Palestinian experts played an important and vital role in the negotiations. The team consisted of maps, land, and settlements experts, and of a group of astute young lawyers who had finally found an opportunity to present the work they had been preparing for two years. They were ready to present in minutes information requested from them, legal opinions, historical quotations, working papers, responses to Israeli arguments, Palestinian supporting documents, and arguments on various issues, and the necessary maps to refute Is-

raeli claims before the American President in many cases; and in a manner indicating a qualitative jump in the Palestinian negotiating effort.

In addition to these strict rules, the host laid down a work format. There were extended committee meetings or meetings that include two persons from each party, or meetings between Albright and members of each delegation on their own to discuss a specific issue. They also relied on informal, direct, contacts between members of the American team and members of the two delegations to explore positions and issues which are close, or may be close to agreement. The host was confident that the atmosphere generated by the strict rules and the urgent pressure to achieve something, in addition to the decisive element of the strong presence of the American administration with all its prestige and standing, would impose on negotiators speedy progress toward achieving the hoped for agreement.

But the American hosts did not realize that the reality of the conflict in the Middle East was stronger than the unreal world they created at Camp David, and courtesies among delegation members in food halls and in the trails of the Retreat were disappearing quickly during heated debates in the negotiation rooms. The hot issues at hand overtook the coolness of Camp David.

Before the start of the summit on the Tuesday afternoon of July 11, members of the Palestinian delegation had the time to tour the “village” and explore its topography. They did not expect to be “held” there for 15 days. Members of the Palestinian delegation had also mixed feelings about being in Camp David. It was difficult for them to forget that they were against the Camp David accords signed by Sadat, Begin and Carter in 1978. Coming to this Retreat, living in the cabins that recorded the names of their previous guests, was cause for reflection and remembrance of important historical events in the Palestinian journey.

When the helicopter carrying President Clinton landed on Tuesday afternoon, July 11, the curtain was about to be raised for the start of a new chapter in the Palestinian – Israeli conflict.



## الورقة الثالثة

### **The search for an honest broker**





*The search for an honest broker*  
*August 1, 2000*

President Franklin Roosevelt, one of the most prominent American presidents in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, once said:“ The American President should be the best actor in the United States.”

When an observer has a chance to see Bill Clinton in action, moving and talking, he realizes on the spot that the current American President is fully adopting what Roosevelt said, and that he realizes its precise meaning and significance. Here, competent acting skills have nothing to do with what is true and what is fake. It is essentially the ability to convince, communicate and exert influence in a society where the individual has a distinguished place, and in an atmosphere in which the image of the politician – structured by public relations experts who package and market the image to target “customers” – plays a decisive role. The ability to deliver the desired message and influence the image, is of vital need for the

success of American policy. In this field, Clinton is an exceptional, innate actor. It is also in this field that his vice president -Now waging an electoral battle with George Bush Jr.for the White House- is weakest. Gore comes across as a boring actor, lacking charisma. He is too serious, and does not laugh easily, and seems nervous and unnatural in front of TV cameras. Bush seems relaxed in front of the cameras, and moves naturally, unlike Gore who has been compared to a robot... Bush, as one American politician put it, convinces the American voter that he can be a President who is self-confident, acts naturally, and without nervousness inside the Oval Office.

Watching Clinton during the summit, the impression one gets is that he is a very intelligent person, a hardworker, someone who does not give up easily, someone with a strong memory, someone who breaks barriers easily, and with overwhelming charisma. Behind all this we can see a wide cultural background, numerous human interests, and a relentless interest in numerous issues. ????? Clinton, for example, would carry his own tray in Laurel restaurant, and filled his plate from the buffet, and sit -as he twice did- with some members of the Palestinian delegation having dinner on the restaurant's balcony. And with ease, the American President would start a conversation, moving from one topic to another. He spoke with great interest about the completion of the human genetic map. He would say: "After a few years, every pregnant woman who enters the hospital will take with her when she leaves her child's genetic map. The map would, for example, show the mother if her daughter is a candidate for breast cancer when she is 35 years-old, and the map would provide a list of medical advice to avoid the illness." Clinton would then talk about, in response to a question, the chances of his wife Hilary, winning the New York Senate race, he would use detailed figures to explain her chances. He would then answer with a short laugh, a question about the film in which he acted, shown at a White House's annual correspondents dinner: "Americans love a President who can make them laugh,"

Clinton, who breakes barriers with everyone, would cleverly state his clear



political markings. He would speak about a trip to the Balkans after its emergence from the wars, and of the impressions he got after meeting people there, and their expectations for peace and development. He spoke about his decision to open the door for trade between the US and Vietnam, so that the chapter haunting many Americans could finally be closed. He also spoke about his relationship with former statesmen and of his vision of the international situation in the new century.

These prominent characteristics of the American President's personality, which were clearly visible to the Palestinian delegation, connected him with President Arafat, with whom he shared a special relationship. It is a relationship that began on the historic day of September 13, 1993 when Yasser Arafat a "terrorist leader" just days before, entered in his military uniform and famous "Kuffiyah" the White House South Lawn to sign the Oslo Accord. The relationship grew over the next seven years of Oslo, and grew stronger during the tenure of Benjamin Netanyahu, and in particular during the Wye River talks which went on for 10 consecutive days, giving the two leaders the opportunity to get to know one another.

Perhaps Clinton, the son of the Sixties who escaped military service in Vietnam and visited Moscow, at a time of turmoil in the universities of the world, had found in Yasser Arafat one of the last legends and giants of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. It is certain that throughout the tens of hours spent together, Clinton listened to President Arafat's honest telling of the Palestinian narrative with all its suffering and aspirations. A narrative by a man who became its symbol and icon to the eyes of the world.

The Palestinians saw in Clinton, who confronted Netanyahu and effectively contributed to his fall, and who addressed the Palestinian National Council at a rare historical moment; a person who could listen and understand. Perhaps because they suffered, and still suffer as a result of what they see as complete bias towards Israel by members of the American peace team. The Palestinians were betting on a pre-supposed objectivity by Clinton, or that is what they were convincing themselves of.

That night, President Clinton left for the G-8 Summit in Okinawa. The Palestinians were clinging to any sign of hope, a sign of the existence of an honest broker. But, of course, no one was under the illusion that Bill Clinton had become an enthusiastic supporter of the Palestinian cause, or a member of a solidarity committee with the Palestinian people. After all, he is the product of the American establishment and a hostage of its policies and strategies, built on what serves its interests, without taking into consideration justice, or rights. An establishment affected by the strong influence of the Israeli lobby, that provocatively flexes its muscles in the corridors of the American administration.

It was clear from the outset that the American President was determined to succeed, and that he had prepared himself well for the “exam.” He read his lessons and did his homework. At any rate, the summit represented an additional “intensive course” for him about the details of the Palestinian – Israeli conflict making him aware of the difference between Kufr Aqeb and Wadi Al-Jouz, and of the organic relationship between the Al-Musrarah and Sheikh Jarrah Quarters, and between Salah Al Deen Street and the Old City of Jerusalem. It was clear that Clinton did not want to waste any minute, and that he wanted to start work immediately. At the inauguration session, Clinton emphasized his determination to work intensively. He tried to propose meetings to discuss water, economy and other issues, that would be held on different levels than that of the Summit, in buildings that hosted the experts. But this proposal was put aside on the spot due to a Palestinian objection which saw a necessity to focus first on the major issues of Jerusalem, refugees, land, borders and security. The American President also tried in his speech to create a tempting material link between the Camp David and Okinawa Summits, promising huge financial support from the G-8 for any agreement the Palestinian and Israeli sides reached.

During the Summit, Clinton followed a pattern based on exercising his personal influence on a number of levels. There were daily, separate meetings with Arafat and Barak. Often, in one day, Clinton would meet several times with one or

both leaders. Clinton also used to attend part of the meetings of the three committees: Refugees, borders/land, and Jerusalem. From the start, Clinton made it clear that he preferred that Jerusalem, because of its sensitivity and complexity, be discussed at the leaders' level.

At a later stage in the Summit, Clinton resorted to the tactic of summoning delegates from each committee to "Aspen" to discuss their files. He repeated this tactic intensively during the last two days of the Summit. He once participated in a discussion which lasted from 11 pm until 5 am over the issues of security in the presence of two delegates from each side. Clinton did not seek to hold meetings for the three leaders, except in the first night of the Summit, and to discuss procedural issues, and also the morning of the last day of the Summit to agree on the content of a statement declaring its failure.

In these meetings, Clinton listened to the views of the two parties, discussed details, and sometimes, tried to direct the discussion. During a meeting of the land and border committee, Clinton tried to push the Palestinians to discuss a map put forward by the Israelis about their vision for the territories they want to annex and their security concerns. Abu Ala' rejected the map, and Clinton left the meeting angry.

Ultimately, the American President was practicing his role according to the traditions of American political work vis-à-vis the Palestinian – Israeli conflict which can be defined in three points:

1- Washington exercises its role according to the needs, requirements and concerns of the current Israeli government. From day one, members of the Palestinian delegation were constantly subjected to the cliché of Barak's coalition problems, and that: "An agreement should be reached or Barak's government falls". The cliché was changed in the last days of the summit to : "An agreement should be reached or Barak will form a national unity government". These statements were repeated in a provocative manner which made a member of the Palestinian delegation ask angrily: " Is this a summit for salvaging the peace process, or to rescue

Barak's government?"

2- Washington accepts the main Israeli demands as facts that cannot be discussed. Clinton and his team did not refute any major Israeli request in any issue for negotiations, and if Clinton attempts to intervene, it will be to make a secondary amendment which does not change the main principle.

3- The American Administration demands from the Palestinian and Israeli sides equal amounts of "flexibility" and "concessions," meaning any Israeli step should be met by a Palestinian step. By doing so, it ignores the fact that the Palestinians are the victims of aggression by Israel, and that the land the Israelis are offering to give up, is Palestinian land occupied by military force.

These three affirmed rules led to three facts defined as follows:

1- The American Administration destroyed during the summit, the references of the peace process: Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338, and the principle of land for peace. These are references which were defined by the US Administration when it launched the peace process in Madrid in 1991.

The American broker did not intervene, even once, to caution the Israeli side that what they demanded to keep from the Palestinian territories contradicts the references of the Peace Process. The Americans accepted these demands and considered them a basis, if not a ceiling, for negotiations.

2- The American team was committed to Henry Kissinger's infamous pledge which obliges the American Administration not to present or take any positions on the Arab – Israeli conflict without prior coordination with Israel. No proposal was presented to the Palestinian delegation by the American side that was not presented to Israel first.

In the two instances in which the American team presented ideas during the summit, they were rejected on the spot by the Palestinians. President Arafat refused to call them American ideas, and said to the Americans: "Excuse me, these are not American ideas, they are Israeli ideas I received unofficially from the Israelis hours before I received them from you."

3- From the first day, the American team directed its pressure at the Palestinian delegation. Although the Israeli delegation backed down from positions it presented during the Stockholm negotiations, there was no attempt [by the Americans] to exercise any pressure on the Israelis. They were treated like a spoiled baby that should be pleased. The Palestinian side had to provide protection to Barak's government, considered by the Americans as a valuable strategic investment.

Regarding the more sensitive issue of the holy places in Jerusalem, the American position adopted the Israeli position. The Americans attempted to find a deceptive legal framework, without giving much attention to Arab, Islamic and Christian sensitivities in this regard, and without realizing the explosive nature of the Israeli arguments.

Very often, (putting President Clinton in another context) members of the Palestinian delegation felt that they were negotiating with a united Israeli - American delegation. In light of the insignificant roles of Madeleine Albright and Sandy Berger (whose only contribution to the summit was his demand that Jews be allowed to pray at the Aqsa Mosque..), the fingerprints of Dennis Ross, the American peace coordinator, were clear on every American document and step. Some members of the American team even used to sit grim-faced when negotiations fell into a crisis, and stopped returning greetings by members of the Palestinian delegation, in a behavior best suited to primary school students, rather than to officials directing the policy of a country that leads the world.

The Palestinians went to Camp David expecting to find an honest broker... But he did not show up. The Palestinians then lowered their expectations, and were happy to look for a mere broker in the forests of Camp David... But could not find him.



## الورقة الرابعة

### **Peace According to the Criteria of the Gallup Institute**







## **Peace According to the Criteria of the Gallup Institute**

### ***August 3, 2000***

س They are not ready for peace. Didn't I tell you? This is what President Yasser Arafat told his delegation, more than once, days after the start of the Camp David Summit. The Israeli positions affirmed Palestinian fears conveyed by Abu Ammar when he tried to convince Washington not to issue an invitation to a summit.

It was difficult for any participant at Camp David to expect for a moment that the Israeli delegation was ready to take the big risk that would lead to the historic reconciliation ending a conflict that has entered its second century. The Israelis came to Camp David with their mythology, arrogance of power and the mosaic of the interior politics. It was very clear that the minds and attention of the Israeli delegation were somewhere else. Opinion polls from the Gallup Institute, statements by party leaders, and articles by Israeli media commentators were more important to some in the Israeli delegation than reaching a historic peace

agreement. Their view of the issues would expand of narrow depending on petty calculations and personal interests. Ballot box considerations overshadowed peace considerations.

In short, there were no peacemakers among the Israeli delegation. There was a group of local politicians looking to protect their seats in the Knesset. That was reflected in the way the Israeli negotiator operated. It became a familiar thing for a Palestinian negotiator to listen to his Israeli counterpart complain about Barak's performance and positions. The word 'Moderate' became an accusation that every Israeli negotiator tried to shy from so that his name would not appear in a survey.

Now, after Camp David, we hear these negotiators gloat that they said and affirmed and made clear to Arafat, while at Camp David they were sitting like a student listening to a Yasser Arafat lessons in politics, history and peacemaking. Another negotiator, unable to hide his glee, attacked the Palestinians for missing the chance to reach an agreement at Camp David. Reading into the Israeli negotiating performance at Camp David one comes to three observations:

١- Barak came to Camp David dreaming of reaching a peace that was ١٠٠ percent Israeli. His positions, proposals and maps did not reveal the minimum understanding of Palestinian demands and rights. The Israeli proposal affirmed that the Israeli institutions were still caved in mythology and occupation. They proved that they were still unable to deal with the Palestinians as peace partners.

٢- In their proposals the Israelis failed to mention any international references. They launched their proposals with Israeli requests without indicating any interest in mentioning any international resolutions especially the resolutions supposed to be the very basis of the Peace Process.

٣- The Israeli negotiators excused themselves from real negotiations. True the Palestinian-Israeli negotiating sessions lasted tens of hours and most of the issues were discussed, but what is also true is that every new sentence in the Israel position would come through American lips and papers.

What was strange was that the Israelis thought they could, with the support of the Americans, impose their peace on the Palestinians. It was strange because the Israeli security establishment was presenting the political leadership with a

different assessment. Prior to the Summit many of Barak's envoys heard directly from Yasser Arafat what the Palestinian positions were. Two weeks prior to the Summit Barak asked Arafat to meet with Shlomo Ben Ami, head of the Israeli delegation in Stockholm, who was to present Arafat with the Israeli positions on the issues of the final status. For four hours Arafat listened to Ben Ami, he listened to the details that, according to Arafat, made him unable to sleep that night. Arafat was sure once again that the Israelis were not serious and were not ready. In that meeting which took place in Nablus, Ben Ami proposed that the issue of Jerusalem be postponed for two years at which Arafat interrupted him saying: "Not even for two hours."

Another Israeli envoy visited Arafat in Ramallah during that time. The envoy heard the Palestinian red lines. It was Yossi Sarid, head of the Meretz party who had resigned from Barak's government; he came to affirm that Barak was serious and to tell the Palestinians not to expect to get ۱۰۰ percent of their demands. All the Israeli envoys would say that Barak had a surprise but he would reveal it only at the Summit.

Throughout the sessions, the Palestinians waited for Barak to pull the rabbit out of the hat. What they got was the following:

#### REFUGEES:

The refugee committee was the most difficult, strangest and most unsuccessful. In this committee the Palestinian vision clashed hard with the Israeli vision.

In the absence of seriousness on the part of Israel, the discussion revolved mostly around the past, and not the present or the future. The clash and difference between the two visions goes back to the Palestinian Nakba, or catastrophe, to its very roots.

It was the most difficult committee because it was the 'real' committee, ruled by history, and because it placed Israel at the center of the Palestinian question. It placed Israel in front of her victims, in front of the witnesses to the crime and the homeowners???

It was strange because Israeli continued to deny the crime. There is a complete denial of the Nakba and of the Israeli responsibility in causing it. It was the

Palestinian negotiator who must be convinced that there were no massacres or campaigns of terror, expulsion and house demolitions. And that the Arab countries should be blamed for the Nakba, who, according to Israel convinced the Palestinians to leave their homes and wait for liberation !!.. And when the Israelis were presented with the memoirs and the testimony of their own generals, they rejected them.

It was the most unsuccessful committee because it did not move one inch forward. Israel refused to take moral and legal responsibility for the Nakba. There is only a willingness to express sorrow over what befell the Palestinians as a result of the Arab-Israeli war of ١٩٤٨. And because talk of the right of return was a taboo for Israel, tantamount to a declaration of a war of destruction on Israel, there was a rejection of any talk of putting a timetable for the implementation of the return. All that Israel would talk about was compensation for the refugees, not from its pocket, but from the pocket of the international community, and part of the funds would be used to compensate Jews who came to Israel from Arab countries. Israel only committed itself to allowing several thousands to return within ten years through family reunification and humanitarian cases.

#### LAND, BORDERS AND SECURITY:

These issues would sometimes be discussed in one committee and sometimes in two committees, borders and security. In those two committees, Israel proved that she has not abandoned the mentality of occupation and control. Their ridiculous theory of the danger coming from the East was the basis of their demand for a strong presence for them there. Their presence would be in different forms starting with bases, then patrols, and finally, early warning systems along the border and in the Jordan Valley. Further, Israel would impose strict restrictions on the military personnel of the state of Palestine.

The Israelis tried to create an outside threat to justify the claim of confronting that threat, without attempting to deal with the requirements for a peace that would not allow danger to emerge in the first place; from Palestinian towns, villages and camps.

Here, the provocative Israeli maps emerged. The Palestinian side refused to deal with them. One map showed an annexation by Israel of about ١٠ percent of the West Bank, another map showed an annexation of about ١٢,٥ percent. The focus was on three huge settlement blocks in the north, center and south of the West Bank. These settlements were flattened, their area expanded and they were connected to each other and to Israel by large areas of Palestinian land and also controlled Palestinian water resources in the West Bank.

The Israelis were coming to cement their gains in the ١٩٦٧ War, not to make a peace that would erase the effects of that war. They came to re-structure the occupation and legitimize it, instead of looking for a language of dialogue with the neighbor and partner that addressed life and co-existence.

#### JERUSALEM:

Barak, his ministers and members of his delegation borrowed the hats of the most extreme of the religious Jews and came wearing them to the Summit.

Suddenly, the secularist began speaking the language of the adamant religious, which even some the Rabbis of Israel do not agree with. Suddenly, the Israeli demand to allow Jews to pray in the Haram al Sharif became an essential Israeli demand and Israeli sovereignty over the Haram (because the second temple laid under the Haram) was an issue that could not be discussed. So this was the rabbit that the magician Barak promised to surprise the Summit participants with.

What was of the utmost danger was that the American officials, without hesitation or a thought of the effects of such a demand, adopted this position. Not for a second did they realize they were toying with explosives that could ignite the Middle East and the Islamic World, nor did they try to understand that in reality they were adding the religious characteristic to the conflict in a way that would lead it to an inevitable destructive confrontation. ???

In the Jerusalem file, as one could assess from the American ideas and Israeli proposals, three factors guide Israel's future vision on Jerusalem.

١-Israel's insistence on sovereignty over the Haram al-Sharif is consistent in all-Israeli proposals that took different forms. To face the Palestinian position regarding this issue, American legal experts began revealing their talents and

presenting their solutions, which were at times ridiculous, and always drew Palestinian condemnation.

After the Palestinian rejected Israel's control over the Haram, the Americans came with the idea that an international committee comprised of the Security Council and Morocco (head of the Islamic Committee), would give the state of Palestine guardianship of the Haram with the Israel retaining sovereignty over it. Then the American legal genius came up with the vertical ??? sovereignty formula. Palestinians would have sovereignty on what is over the land were the Haram stands, and Israel will have sovereignty under the Haram..

۲- Israel was keen on getting rid of the Arab residents of Jerusalem while keeping the Palestinian land. In a best-case scenario, Israel would create harsh living conditions, forcing them to leave.

۳- Proposals by Israel and the United States showed a future Jerusalem that was divided while talk revolved around an open city. The proposals featured the implementation of many systems in the neighborhoods of Jerusalem. For example, the rules that would apply to the Christian Quarter would not apply to Wadi Al Jouz. What is carried out in Suwwaneh, cannot be carried out in the Armenian Quarter. What was proposed was a fragmentation of Jerusalem, especially the Old City that would fall under conflicting systems that would cause constant tension.

The Americans proposed a special system for the Old City that would fragment it between Palestinian sovereignty over the Muslim and Christian Quarters (as they will be defined by Israel and the US) and Israeli sovereignty over the Armenian and Jewish Quarters as well as the Western Wall. The position regarding the Haram would remain as is.

A system close to a self-rule in the form of duties, was proposed for the neighborhoods (to be defined by Israel) inside Jerusalem. These include Sheikh Jarrah, Suwwaneh, Tur and Salah El-Deen Street. They also include Damascus Gate, Ras Al-Amoud and Silwan. Palestinian sovereignty will come over neighborhoods that fall outside Jerusalem (again according to Israeli definition) like Issaweyeh, Shu'fat, Beit Hanina, Qalandia, Turi, Um Tuba and West Samara, Kufr Aqab, Semiramis; most of these areas are not part of Jerusalem.??? There would be special arrangements that would keep the city an open city. A

special system (to be named later) would be placed on the Old City, it would include a sovereign compound for President Arafat and the State of Palestine near the Haram in the Old City. When you draw a picture of Jerusalem out of the proposals, you see a fragmented city, a divided city falling under Israeli control, and one that would expel its Arab residents and is ruled by tension.

The Israeli delegation and the American peace team coordinated their steps, step-by-step and word-by-word. The Palestinians would see a comedy routine when the Americans would announce they would present a new idea, that they want the negotiators from both sides to consult with their leaders on. In all instances, the Israeli negotiators would come back with an Israeli acceptance after conducting consultations.

At times, the Israeli-American goal was very clear. There was an attempt to pass an agreement that would return parts of the occupied territories, not all, and would keep some for Israel (in the name of security) along the border areas. An agreement that provided a solution to the refugee issue through compensation and neutralization or emigration to a Western country. And of course, the State of Palestine will have the power to carry out duties in Jerusalem.

Israel and the United States wanted to fabricate a solution, a solution incapable of a moment's survival. And to cash in with a golden signature from the Palestinians that would end the conflict and give final legitimacy to Israel.

The plan was to close the Palestinian deal at the lowest price. But it was clear that the American and Israeli teams needed several days after the start of the Summit to realize what it meant to face the man named Yasser Arafat.





## The Summit According to Jerusalem Time





## **The Summit According to Jerusalem Time**

In going to Camp David, Yasser Arafat was aware that he was entering a difficult battle, an extremely difficult one.

During the long journey from Togo Washington, Abu Ammar was not able to get enough sleep. He was re-thinking the situation, evaluating the different elements and factors and re-considering his calculations. The final outcome, according to all possible scenarios, led to one conclusion: There will be intransigent Israeli positions at the Summit, coordinated and fully supported by influential circles within the American Administration, especially in the American peace team. Accordingly, there would be a difficult confrontation, an extremely difficult one.

Yasser Arafat preferred not to clash with the US Administration on a procedural issue such as holding the Summit, preserving his strength for the expected clash, brought about by the collusion of American officials with the

Israeli position. He realized of course, that in the end, he would enter a battle against the US position on the home turf of the only superpower in a unipolar world. He also realized he was coming from a divided Arab World, unable to even hold a Summit, and from a climate without sufficient immunity to resist American pressure.

But Yasser Arafat also believed that he was the leader of a nation defending its national rights, and if the battle were imposed upon him, he had to enter it. He also believed that his pessimistic expectations should not negate the possibility to examine any prospect, no matter how little it was, if it led to progress on the way to achieving an agreement. Therefore, his instructions to his delegation were clear and decisive: ;We want a nationalistic and honorable solution which we all know the limits of.??? Listen and discuss, and if you see a door ajar, try to open it. If you see a small opening, try to widen it. I am not optimistic at all, but I say to you, we are not allowed to waste any opportunities that may achieve the objectives of our people.س

From the small verandah at Birch cabin used for receiving guests, for meeting and eating, and from the inviting balcony on sunny days, Yasser Arafat led his battle... One of the most difficult battles in his whole life. His morning started at 9 am, after going to bed at 2, or 3, or 4 or 5 in the morning depending on how negotiations went. At breakfast, he reviewed papers coming from the the Presidential Headquarters (Al Muntada) in Gaza. The papers included official reports about the general situation in Palestine, in addition to urgent papers requiring his signature or his appropriate recommendation. Then, Yasser Arafat would look at a file comprised of tens of papers faxed from the Information and Archive Center of Al-Muntada. They were summaries of the most important material published in Palestinian, Israeli, Arab and international press on that day. His review of these papers would be interrupted to receive delegation members who came for the 9:30 am meeting to prepare for the day's negotiation sessions, and sometimes to present reports about late night negotiation sessions.

When all delegation members left to their negotiation sessions, which would often start between ١٠ and ١١ am, Abu Ammar returned to his news file. What attracted his attention most and gave him satisfaction, was the news of the various popular activities in the Palestinian territories during the Summit, such as demonstrations, sit ins, conferences, etc..

He would be saddened by reading, sometimes while going through a confrontation at the Summit, a statement by a Palestinian political faction leader decrying: ٣The details of the agreements and understandings reached at Camp David.س. He would comment bitterly: ٣They could, at least have postponed their slander until the end of the Summit.س. When he was shown articles praising his positions at the Summit by Arab journalists and media, which had accused him days before the Summit, of selling out Jerusalem, he did not show interest and would only say :سMay God forgive them.س.

In the midst of the piles of paper, he always looked for any news indicating any supporting Arab position and he would underline it. During the hours of the morning, if there were no meetings with President Clinton or Albright, Arafat would sit with members of his delegation who were not assigned negotiations that day. The discussions went back to decades ago, and reached, at the same time distant horizons.

Yasser Arafat, sitting with his famous Kuffiyah on the balcony of Birch cabin in Camp David, surrounded from two sides by parts of the Retreat's forest, realized completely the essence of the historical moment he lived, and knew the dimensions and size of the role he was performing.

Yasser Arafat knew the huge burden of the mandate he was bearing, and the trust he should preserve and fulfill as a leader of a people whose destiny and source of glory was to protect and preserve the holy places of their land. He realized - a realization which was not a source of pride, but a feeling of great responsibility - that he entered a battle in the name of the Palestinian people, Arab nations and the Islamic world, as well Christians. In these bad and difficult times, the Palestinians had to enter the battle of defending Jerusa-

lem on behalf of all. He had to defend the Holy City that was linked to eternal names starting with the Islamic Caliph Omar Bin Al-Khattab, and ending with Salah Al-Deen Al-Ayyoubi; and he and his people entered the war on their own.

War battles are much easier, that is what Yasser Arafat reiterated in the past, and that is what he re-affirmed at Camp David. In wars you can know precisely the size of enemy troops, and to a great extent you can predict his next move, and then lead your soldiers to the battle field. These matters are much easier than political and diplomatic battles in which you do not know from where, and when, stabs come.

Yasser Arafat was not interested in, or keen to enter a war with the only world power left. Throughout his life, he tried not to enter unnecessary battles, unless they were imposed on him. He did not want to cause harm to what the Palestinians felt was a readiness by the President Bill Clinton to listen to, and understand the Palestinian narrative. But Yasser Arafat seemed to have brought with him the gist of his numerous experiences, mixing the courage of the fighter, the cleverness of the astute politician, and the wisdom of the experienced statesman. He did not want a clash, but he did not hesitate for a minute to put up a strong defense, or to enter a difficult battle, which seemed impossible for some people, against the American position on the land of Camp David.

Although the course of the negotiations confirmed every day the accuracy of his analysis, this was a cause for his feeling of resentment. We need a solution. And our people need a solution that puts an end to its suffering, but of course not any solution, he would say.

Members of the delegation started returning at midday to present their reports on the morning sessions of the negotiation committees that would resume in the afternoon. The evening and night hours were the most active on Yasser Arafat's agenda. It included sometimes going to the Laurel restaurant to attend an official dinner. It seemed that he had found two colleagues who liked working during

the night: Bill Clinton and Ehud Barak. Most of the Arafat & Clinton meetings were held during the night, and the longest and stormiest sessions of the negotiation committees also started late at night and ended in the early hours of the next day.

At Camp David, Yasser Arafat realized that he was confronting a plot which aimed to destroy the essence of the Palestinian national rights, and he did not miscalculate. Facts proved that the title of the plot was Jerusalem, whether by attempting to impose a solution that did not make it once again Palestinian and Arab, or by trying to postpone it. To defend Jerusalem and the Palestinian rights (land and refugees), Yasser Arafat built three lines of defense:

1- The Palestinian People:

In the face of an American campaign of “conciliation” and “intimidation” to “salvage” Barak’s government, Arafat reminded his American host: “You forget the Palestinian people.”

Yasser Arafat reminded the American officials that there was a Palestinian entity, with an executive committee, a council of ministers, National, Central and Legislative councils???, as well as a vicious opposition; and above all, an alert people unanimously agreeing on major principles. This people who :“accepted to make many sacrifices for the sake of peace, but were not prepared for more concessions”. He reminded them that to be barricaded behind “the distinction of accountability, democracy and opposition” was not Israel’s monopoly alone.

They said to him: ;You should be flexible, an agreement should be reached or Barak’s government will fall.س He answered: ;But if we accept less than our rights, and if we give up Jerusalem, the entire Palestinian system will collapse.

In a decisive meeting with president Clinton on July 19, Abu Ammar said: “The Palestinian leader who can sign on giving up Jerusalem has not been born yet. I will not betray the trust, and I will not betray my people.” Arafat added: “I will not grant occupation the legitimacy to continue... But it will not last forever. It is not possible to continue with the imposition of military force, and South Africa is an example.”

He reminded his American host of the rules of Palestinian policy: “I am an

elected president according to a clear program. Our leadership bodies have laid down our political line. Our people will not accept less than their rights as stated by international resolutions and international legality.” He warned a number of times: “I told you, if the Summit fails, you will make nations lose hope for peace. Do not push our people towards despair.”

## 2- Rights, history and International legality:

Yasser Arafat's voice would start quietly and then sharpen and became like thunder when his American hosts raised ideas which demanded Palestinian concessions over Jerusalem and territories.???

He said in a meeting with Mrs. Albright: “If they, Israelis, use the argument of history, we have our ancient history that negates their allegations and confirm our rights.” He often indulged in long explanations with his American host about lessons in religion and history, about the Al-Aqsa mosque and denying Israeli allegations regarding the potential existence of the temple underneath it. He asked: “After the occupation of Jerusalem in 1967, Moshe Dayan, considered by Israelis as a hero, prevented Jews from praying in the Haram, so why are they now demanding to pray there?” He said, “Remember, we only speak about 22 percent of the land of Palestine. We did what is requested from us to provide the requirements of peace, and now it is Israel’s turn.”

He would always say, “I would like to have peace based on the implementation of UN Resolution 242, as it was implemented on the Egyptian, Jordanian and Lebanese fronts. I would like the resolution to be implemented in full on the Palestinian territories.” He asked sharply: “Why did you not ask Egypt during Camp David 78 to give up an inch of Sinai, and you now request from us to give up our land?. You, who laid down the reference for the peace process and identified it in Resolutions 242 and 338 and the principle of land for peace. Do you want to abandon it now?”

Arafat used to respond with historical facts and testimonies to the arguments of Israeli myths. He resorted to international legality to confront attempts to make malformed settlements and solutions. He gave lessons to some American



team members who were infected by an awkward sensitivity which annoyed them when there was talk of principles and rights. They claimed the honor of possessing pragmatism that makes them understand only the logic of bazaar retailers.???

### ۳- The Arab, Islamic and Christian Dimensions:

Throughout the days of the Summit which focused mainly on Jerusalem, Yasser Arafat explained to his American host the various dimensions of the issue. He explained to the American peace team the overwhelming strategic threats of the recommendations they raised with their president and presented to him.

He stressed: “Jerusalem is not a Palestinian city only, it is an Arab, Islamic and Christian one. If I am going to take a decision on Jerusalem, I have to consult with the Sunnis and the Shiites and all the Arab countries. I have to consult with many countries starting with Iran and Pakistan, passing by Indonesia and Bangladesh and ending with Nigeria. Do you expect that anybody would agree on giving legality to the allegations of the Israelis, and giving up Jerusalem and the Al-Aqsa mosque?” He gave lessons in the history of religions and the history of Palestine to elaborate. He revolted a number of times saying???, “Do you want me to sell the Christians to Israel, and hand over the Armenians to her?”. He once looked at Gamal Hilal, President Clinton’s translator, an Egyptian Copt with US citizenship, and said, “What would my friend [the Coptic] Pope Shenoudah say if I did this?”.

In one of the meetings, Arafat warned against the consequences of the American-supported Israeli arguments regarding Al-Aqsa mosque and Jerusalem. ;These arguments are explosives which will set off massive fires in the region and the whole world. Beware, do not repeat these arguments, they are dangerous; Dangerous and destructive. Do you want me throw the region into an age of new religious conflict?س.

At the same meeting, Arafat concluded his long verbal attack with an indicative phrase: “Well, if I cannot liberate Jerusalem and raise the Palestinian

flag there, one day someone else will liberate, it and raise his country's flag there."

While Yasser Arafat was mounting his defense lines, he was carrying out an aggressive, three-front policy in negotiation tactics regarding Jerusalem.

١. During the process of negotiation, the impossibility of reaching any agreement that did not deal with Jerusalem was affirmed. On a number of occasions, Clinton expressed his understanding of this logic.

٢. The idea of Abu Dis as the capital was dropped at an early stage when it was affirmed that the Jerusalem the Palestinian delegation spoke about was mainly the Old City, its gates, the neighborhoods of Musrarah, Sheikh Jarrah, and Salah Al-Deen street, as well as Al-Suwwanah, Wadi Al-Jouz, Al-Tour, Silwan and Ras Al-Amoud. Therefore, at the end of the Summit, talk about concentrating the Presidency of the Palestinian State in Abu Dis stopped, and started to focus on the Old City. That ridiculous idea, written about by journalists and talked about by Israeli politicians for a long time was dropped forever.

3. The Palestinian delegation rejected any fragmentation of the issue of the Holy City, emphasizing the Palestinian position insisting on the restoration of Palestinian sovereignty over it. There was a concern frequently expressed by Abu Ammar that any solution should not cause further hardship to the citizens of Jerusalem, who had suffered, and still do from the miseries of occupation since 1967.

With these defense lines and these negotiation tactics, Yasser Arafat was waging the battle for defending Jerusalem.

In effect, the battle started on the third day of the Summit when Mrs. Albright officially notified a number of Palestinian delegates that the American team was about to present a paper stating its vision regarding points of agreement and disagreement between the Palestinian and Israeli positions (this is a classic negotiation exercise the Palestinian and Israeli negotiators got used to during past years, although there was a permanent view that it is a necessary exercise only when positions become closer, not when they are very distant). Albright said the paper would deal with all issues. In regards to Jerusalem, we will deal with it afterwards.س When Abu Ammar was informed of this, he had his first explosion of the Summit. His fears were represented in attempts to postpone the issue of Jerusalem, and his reaction was: We will not accept this, let us pack and leave.س

The Palestinian position was quickly conveyed to the American side. "We reject any ideas or papers that do not address the issue of Jerusalem, and that the Palestinian delegation will leave Camp David immediately." The American response was quick, Jerusalem will be in the paper.

The second crisis was set off by the promised paper on July ١٤. It was a bad paper by all standards, and indicated the lack of honesty on the part of the American peace team when conveying true positions ??? to President Clinton, which amounted to deliberate misleading. The paper distorted the Palestinian positions on the main issues, while adding titles ??? presented by the American team to bridge gaps in positions between the two sides. The paper was Israeli in full, especially in regards to adopting the municipal solution in Jerusalem, and raising the idea of Abu Dis as capital.

A Palestinian response letter was immediately prepared and presented to Mrs. Albright showing how the proposed American ideas contradicted the references of the peace process, and their distortion of Palestinian positions, and the official American positions on Jerusalem. The letter was decisive and clear-cut. The American answer was quick, the paper, they said, was no longer standing. And Clinton told Arafat, the paper "is null and void." The Palestinian team won another round in a hard war of attrition.

Following ١٢ hour marathon negotiations that took place in the early morning of July ١٦, and included negotiators from each side held by President Clinton, the picture of Israeli stance regarding Jerusalem became clear. At that moment, Yasser Arafat felt the necessity for practical negotiation on one hand, and political and historical negotiations on the other hand, to confirm ? the Palestinian position. He sent a letter to President Clinton re-affirming the principles of the Palestinian position. The most important element in the letter was the affirmation that achieving any final agreement was dependent on the inclusion of a solution to the issues of Jerusalem and refugees, according to international resolutions.

The Palestinian delegation felt that the coordinated and unified American ٣ Israeli negotiation tactics sought to close the files which Israel could benefit from, such as the land issue, which Israel demanded to annex large proportions of, and the security issue where Israel demanded numerous exceptions. At the same time, this tactic deliberately postponed the discussion of issues Israel wants to

marginalize or delay, such as Jerusalem and refugees.

Attempts to reach a partial agreement were falling apart. But the biggest crisis was yet to come. The time of Clinton's departure from Camp David to attend the summit of industrial countries in Okinawa, Japan was getting closer. A whole week passed without achieving any progress, and therefore the Americans started to speed up their moves to measure the possibilities of achieving an agreement.

On July ١٧, in a private meeting, President Clinton presented President Arafat ideas he read from a paper. Abu Ammar wrote them down in his diary. Most of the ideas were dedicated to Jerusalem, while one line spoke of reaching a satisfactory solution to the refugee issue, and the annexation of ٩ % of Palestinian land to Israel. Regarding the Holy City, the paper addressed Palestinian sovereignty on the Islamic Christian Quarters. The Armenian and Jewish Quarters would be annexed to Israel. As for the Aqsa mosque, the sovereignty would be Israeli, while the Security Council and Morocco (Head of the Jerusalem Committee) granted custody to the Palestinian State to administer it. The ideas included a superficial treatment of the future of the remaining neighborhoods of Jerusalem. The paper talked about Palestinian sovereignty in the suburbs, and a special regime in the internal neighborhoods, where Palestinians would have functional authority. The ideas also contained a paragraph about the necessity to announce an end to the conflict between the two sides.

Abu Ammar's response was decisive, "They are Israeli ideas, I received them unofficially as Israeli ideas from the Israeli delegation two hours ago." The American team headed by Clinton was thus officially announcing their full adoption of the Israeli ideas. The summit was taking another course. Some of the Israeli delegation members believed that the American ideas would pass, and that Ehud Barak agreed on them with an American belief that a Palestinian agreement on these ideas could be obtained. But on the other side, that rainy night witnessed an end to the remaining hopes and illusions of a possibility of reaching an agreement. The American and Israeli delegations were melting into one.

That night, Abu Ammar called his delegation for an emergency meeting,

and after discussing all the ideas, and asked the Americans about some points, a letter was drafted for President Clinton referring to the contradiction of these ideas with the references of the peace process, and referring to the Palestinian letter signed on July 16 as a suitable basis for negotiation. The Palestinian letter was handed over to the American side at 2 am, July 18. But a telephone call by the Americans at 3 am demanded a specific Palestinian answer. Did the American ideas form a basis for negotiations?.

Members of the delegation were summoned again to Birch, President Arafat's cabin. There was no time for a lengthy discussion. It took 30 minutes to draft the political wording of the letter, that would include a decisive stand: "We consider that these ideas do not form a basis for negotiations."

At that time Saeb Erekat went to "Aspen" and stood in a room at the entrance translating the content of the letter to Bruce Rydell, vice president of the American National Security Council. The latter's response was, "It's all over."

But the "greatest actor in the United States" had a different opinion.



## الورقة السادسة

### A Long American Movie







## **A Long American Movie**

On his first day in the Oval Office, an American President starts his day by thinking of the last day of his presidency, which he normally seeks to extend to the maximum eight years allowed by the American constitution. From day one, the American President starts to think of his legacy in his country's history, and for the eventual publication of his memoirs. In addition, he also starts planning the selection of the place where his memorial library will be located after he departs the White House, its design and contents.

Still, regardless of how important and influential a President's accomplishments might have on people's lives (in the economy, health care, social security, and civil rights), an accomplishment in foreign policy (winning a war, achieving peace that touches the lives of Americans) remains more attractive since it guarantees the President a place in world history books.

For an ambitious and enthusiastic president like President Clinton, what had been achieved during his presidency in terms of an ideal economic situa-

tion, unseen since the end of World War II is not going to be attributed to him only. In addition, his participation in the war and peace efforts in the Balkans and Ireland remains marginal and lacks the required glow to make it stand out in history books. Since his election to office in 1992, Clinton also suffered from a merciless relationship with the media, which shed additional lights on his relationships with women. The nadir was reached in the Monica Lewinsky affair, which seriously endangered his Presidency impeachment. Still, his relentless efforts, stubbornness, excellent communications skills, the support he enjoyed from his wife, and an ideal economic situation, provided him with a safety net that enabled him to come out a winner, though a wounded one, from the scandal.

Because of the above, peace in the Middle East became the golden trophy which Clinton dreamt of winning. It is a very attractive prize since it is related to one of the most intractable problems of the 20th century, and also because it has to do with the Jews, who not only make up the largest lobby, but also have the most distinct ethnic presence in the American political arena. Such a trophy is very tempting to any leader and international politician. It was and still is capable of attracting many of those who dream of it, or at least who dream of getting close to it among world politicians, diplomats, journalists, businessmen; and even crooks.

In addition, there was a historic moment, that linked Clinton to the issue of peace and conflict in the Middle East. The moment that witnessed the historic handshake between Yasser Arafat and Yitzhak Rabin, as Bill Clinton stood between them, on the White House lawn on a warm September 13, 1993.

Maybe it is helpful to mention that the historic handshake did not come as a coincidence. It was in fact carefully planned as is shown in the White House protocol papers distributed to officials from both delegations 24 hours prior to the Declaration of Principles (DOP) signing ceremony. When the issue has to do with photo-ops, the Americans leave nothing to chance. As much as they give attention to the background, the color of the President's suit and tie, as much attention is also given to the main photo, which will be published in history books. In the protocol papers, there were a few lines that read: "President Clinton will extend his arms to bring both Chairman Arafat and Prime

Minister Yitzhak Rabin closer to each other so they may shake hands.” This is exactly what happened, despite the feigned hesitancy and reticence of Yitzhak Rabin.

It is also worth mentioning that Clinton and his administration jumped in the last minute on the saddle of a dark horse, which managed an upset victory: The Oslo Agreement, concluded by negotiators of the PLO and the Israeli government. Although Washington was informed at an early stage by the Israelis of the ongoing contacts in Oslo, members of the Peace team at the State Department made light of the issue. They wanted to build the world according to the occasional papers some of them produced while working for a think-tank considered a pillar of the Israeli lobby in the United States. Ideas in these papers were based on ruling out any direct role for the PLO, and establishing a limited self-rule through encouragement of the local leadership in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

No matter how many times the Palestinian delegation, which was negotiating in Washington for two years, affirmed to the American Administration that it was virtually impossible for its plans to succeed, and no matter how many times that delegation announced (nearly in every meeting) that it was the delegation of the PLO, working under PLO directives. Still, State Department strategists continued to stick to their guns: “The truth only exists in our papers and documents.” Therefore, there were great disappointment and shock when they learned of the success of the Oslo negotiations.

Until then they were rejecting with a superior, arrogant, and often rude manner proposals presented by the Palestinian delegation during the spring and summer of 1993, which called for sending in forces from the Palestine Liberation Army (PLA) into Gaza and Jericho to assume responsibility for security as a prelude to its deployment in the rest of the West Bank. The American team were saying: “Put these illusions aside, there is no role for your people in Tunis, it is over”.??? This is also why their embarrassment was scandalous ??when they later learned that at the time they were arrogantly dismissing such proposals, the Government of Israel was concluding an agreement in Oslo on more serious issues with the same “people in Tunis”...

The scene was unique and distinctive at one of the seventh floor rooms of

the State Department building on the afternoon of September 7, 1993 when members of the Palestinian delegation entered to meet with the State Department's Peace team. Many Palestinian delegations had entered the room before, but this time it was different, as it was the first that a delegation officially representing the PLO and including some of its members, entered the building of the State Department along with other members of the negotiating team.

When members of the American Peace team gathered in one of the rooms trying to draw fake smiles on their faces, which failed to cover up for the feelings of disappointment, loss, and personal failure for having to meet with a PLO delegation; they did not know that they were about to hear what they had never dreamt of hearing; the PLO delegation said: "President Arafat will personally come to Washington to attend the DOP's signing ceremony", which Washington called for in an attempt to jump on Oslo's black horse at the last minute of the race, and catch the historic moment that it failed to create in the first place. In fact, some members of the Peace Team had even tried to undermine in its earlier stages.

From that moment on, Clinton became directly tied to the cause of peace in the Middle East, and in the ensuing years, Washington became a regular place for holding bilateral and trilateral summits, which brought Clinton with Yasser Arafat, and with different Israeli prime ministers, from Rabin, to Netanyahu, to Barak. Since then, members of the American peace team made a career out of traveling to the Middle East and being semi-permanent guests at the headquarters of the Israeli government in West Jerusalem, and at the headquarters of the Palestinian presidency in Gaza and Ramallah.

Therefore, the bond that was created with the issue of peace and the possibility of realizing an accomplishment provided Clinton with an additional motivation to work harder still for a progress in the negotiations. The photo of Clinton hosting Arafat and Rabin while they shook hands has already a distinguished place in history books. In fact, several international magazines selected the photo as one of the most noted photos of the 20<sup>th</sup> century; and it soon became the photo associated with the Clinton tenure.

For all of the above reasons, Clinton thought (based on the advice of his aides Albright- Berger - Ross) that he was capable of accomplishing at Camp

David what the whole world failed to accomplish: To solve the unsolvable, and establish peace in the Middle East. Yet, one week after the convening of Camp David, the American President started to feel that earlier assessments presented by his aides had nothing to do with reality. Winds of failure started blowing hard in the Retreat on the seventh day of the summit, which also witnessed heavy showers that made some of the members of the Palestinian delegation feel envious and say that one day's rain in Washington was good enough for a whole season in Palestine.

A total Palestinian rejection of the American ideas (President Arafat insisted that those ideas were in fact Israeli ideas) narrowed the maneuvering room of the American team, and forced them to go back into playing their expected responsible role, that is: An honest broker. Still, the American President -known for his drive and determination -, did not accept the fact that the letter handed over to the American side on the morning of Wednesday July 19th at the entrance of the Aspen cabin represented the end of the road, a day before he decided to delay his departure to Okinawa. His aides saw that the delay could become an element of pressure, which could push the negotiations forward.

On that day, American tactics started getting tense, members of the American team started sweating after their assessments, analysis, and expectations started proving wrong. At the same time, the President wanted an accomplishment. On the same day, the Americans started to tempt Yasser Arafat with Statehood: "Look to how things would look like if we signed an agreement", they said, "there will be a Palestinian State recognized by the United States and Israel, it will join the international community, and..." but Yasser Arafat was quick to interrupt: "Thank you, the State of Palestine exists since the days of the British Mandate, and even if most of its territories were occupied, still, the legitimacy of its existence is present in UN resolutions". He then sharply added: "I do not exchange a State for Jerusalem."

They would then present a financial sweetener package: "Mr. President, We want to talk about our bilateral relations, we are preparing from today a big financial aid package for the Palestinian State which will be put in motion as soon as the agreement is signed, this issue will be even placed on the agenda of

the Okinawa Summit...” Yasser Arafat again interrupted: “ This is very kind of you, we really need a lot of aid, but let us first concentrate on the main issues, I came here to speak about the land first.”

The Americans then resorted to another attempt; Clinton spent some of his time on Tuesday and Wednesday speaking over the telephone with some Arab leaders in an attempt to push them to pressure Arafat. His message to them was not so accurate??, as he was saying: “There is great progress, there are solutions to all of the issues, we presented generous solutions on the issue of Jerusalem, but Arafat has rejected them. We expect that you will advise him to accept them so we can achieve peace, and if he is unable to accept them, he can agree to postpone the discussion on Jerusalem.”

Still, the telephone that the American Administration expected to start ringing off the hook at Birch cabin never really rang. On one hand, several of those Arab leaders contacted by Clinton never really responded to his request, and those who did respond and called, inquired first about the real facts, and when they learned the truth, they quickly expressed unlimited support for the Palestinian position.

What really helped is that since the first day, Yasser Arafat was keen on maintaining contacts with several Arab and international parties so that they were always kept abreast of what was actually happening. Every day before noon, Nabil Shaath would take out from his pocket a long list of telephone numbers that he had to call, and give a briefing on the situation to each and everyone on the other side of the line. The list included the numbers of foreign ministers of Egypt, Jordan, Morocco, Tunisia, in addition to numbers of the Saudi Ambassador; and that of Miguel Moratinos, the European Union Middle East envoy who was present in the American Capital. The list also included several Russian officials in Moscow, or on President Putin’s plane heading to Okinawa;and French officials in Paris. Everyday new names and numbers were added to the list, suvh as Algerian officials, and officials from the United Arab Emirates. President Arafat then added two more names and numbers: The Syrian Chargé D’Affaires and the Lebanese Ambassador in Washington.

Arafat knew exactly from what angle the Americans were trying to twist

his arm, therefore he quickly executed a preventive move aimed at absorbing the American offensive during the Summit, and also after its conclusion. The American moves started to get even tenser. In a meeting which took place on Wednesday at Aspen, President Clinton started exerting pressure on Arafat by threatening to personally wash his hands from the peace effort in the Middle East. He also started indicating that there was a historic opportunity available, and the Palestinians must not waste it. He wanted Arafat to accept the American ideas despite his recognition that those ideas did not provide solutions to all of the issues. Members of the American team were also saying: "The solution to the Jerusalem issue will open the doors wide open to solving all of the other issues. It will be possible then to quickly solve the issues of refugees, land, and security. "

Arafat would answer with a steadfast and calm voice (at some moments raising his voice): "Do not expect me to betray my people, I will not sell Jerusalem, I will not sell the Moslems, and I will not sell the Christians." At some moments, Clinton seemed to recognize the size of the predicament he was led into by his aides, still he was unable to back out, as he had in the end to adopt and defend the positions of the American establishment which expressed unequivocal support for Israel. At the end, he was defending his personal ambition that sought to guarantee him a prominent place in history.

The world leader was getting ready to depart to Okinawa to attend a meeting of the G-8, which included the leaders of the 7 industrial countries, in addition to Russia. This meeting was very important for him, since it was his last appearance at the G-8. He also did not want to arrive at the meeting leaving behind him failure and disappointment. The Geneva Summit which took place earlier had been enough to shake his international image, when he also listened to the bad advice of the same advisors, and went to meet President Assad at the Swiss city only to find out that there was nothing new worth discussing. Bill Clinton definitely did not need another failure, especially in his own country, and a few months before the end of his term.

As the hours passed by on that day, it became more and more obvious that things at the Presidential Retreat were heading towards a definite failure. At 8:30 pm, President Clinton entered Birch and tried his last shot. He repeated

the same arguments, and listened to the same answers from Yasser Arafat, who also offered, out of the Palestinian care for the peace process ??to continue Palestinian - Israeli negotiations either back home or in Washington for an additional two weeks, after which, President Clinton can assess the situation and call for another summit. Clinton did not accept the offer, and as he left the Birch cabin, it seemed in a mysterious way, like he was paying farewell to Yasser Arafat before he suspended the Summit???

Yasser Arafat immediately gave instructions to his administrative staff, they quickly called the PLO office in Washington and requested the start of preparations for the take-off of Arafat's plane, which usually require 4 to 5 hours. This request became quickly the secret code for the rest of the members of the Palestinian negotiating team who started congregating back to their cabins in order to pack their luggage. One of the members even got dressed in his suit since he was going to be flying on President Arafat's plane; once he was seen by the American protocol team, they immediately called the Birch cabin to verify whether the Palestinians were leaving. The answer came quickly: "We are getting ready for such an option."

The motorcade which carried President Clinton's luggage and communication devices, was parked in the street that extended between the Aspen and Birch cabins. Showers and bad weather conditions prevented the use of helicopters in the retreat, therefore, President Clinton was to use the motorcade, which would drive him to another location where the helicopters could safely take off and fly him to the airport where Air force One was getting ready to take him to Okinawa. The sight of the motorcade getting its engines ready to leave was yet another sign of pressure being exerted by the American side, the message was clear "take advantage of the available opportunity, otherwise you lose the opportunity of Clinton doing something for you, and your cause will be frozen for another year or two."

President Arafat's luggage was also gathered and placed on a van, which was to take it to the Retreat's entrance where another van sent by the PLO office in Washington was waiting to transport it to the airport. Members of the Palestinian delegation started arriving with their luggage after they were asked to do so by Arafat's office in preparation for departure. The conversation among



the Palestinian delegation concentrated on the question of what the next step would be. Members also spoke of the need to activate the Arab and Islamic positions in support of the Palestinian position. Other members also spoke of the expected American response to the failure.

At 9:30 pm, the telephone rang at Birch, President Clinton wanted to speak with President Arafat. Clinton came on the line and said: “I will be leaving in few minutes”. Arafat answered in French: “Bon Voyage “, and continued reaffirming Palestinian care?? for continuing the peace process.

After this telephone conversation, members of the delegation started talking of the definitive end to the Summit, some of them also called the PLO office in Washington requesting airline reservations on the first plane out of Washington. Yet, Clinton, the driven and stubborn President had not said his final word yet. At 10:30 pm, escorted by his aides, and without prior warning, he was calling on members of the Palestinian delegation congregated at Birch’s entrance as he was entering the cabin: “Hi guys, I’ve decided to try your way.” ???

In the small guest room inside the cabin, Clinton told Arafat: “Fine, let us agree to continue negotiations in the region, and afterwards we will decide on what can be done to resume the summit. “ As Clinton left Birch, some of the delegation members were calling their families to say: “We are coming home tomorrow.” At 11:00 pm and as the Middle East was sleeping, CNN was broadcasting a statement by the White House Spokesman announcing that the Summit ended without agreement.

But at 11:40 pm, Clinton who met with Barak before and after every meeting he held with Arafat, entered another time the Birch cabin shouting: “I have a new deal “. The deal was according to Clinton: “I suggest that you stay here at Camp David until I return from Okinawa, let a delegate from each side meet with the other and discuss the issues of Jerusalem and the Haram. The rest of the issues can also be discussed; I have spoken to Prime Minister Barak in this regard.” A small smile showed on Arafat’s face, he got the message: Bill Clinton was not ready to go to Okinawa with a failed Summit behind him. He answered: “Fine Mr. President, we are ready to stay here.” Clinton then got up with relief showing on his face, he shook Arafat’s hand and left the room along

with all his aides who were barely fitting in the small room.

Minutes later, Palestinian negotiators were again carrying their luggage on the golf carts under the rain heading back to their cabins. One of them shouted bitterly tone: “The detention got extended for another few days. “ That night with all of its rapid and strange developments looked like some scenes borrowed from a classic American film. ???

Clinton’s motorcade drove off to Emmitsburg where the Summit’s Press center was located. Clinton announced that the negotiations would continue. An hour later, the leader of the World was on Air Force 1 heading for Okinawa. News agencies, TV screens, and morning headlines of the American newspapers were busy with the news: “Clinton saved the Summit after its collapse.” In reality, the Camp David Summit actually ended on that rainy night.



## الورقة الأخيرة

**Areas of failure ... Boundaries of accomplishment**







**Areas of failure ... Boundaries of accomplishment**  
**August 10, 2000**  
**Camp David, The Finale**

When Madeleine Albright took over the reigns at Camp David during the four days President Clinton spent in Japan, Palestinian and Israeli negotiators suffered from a real state of inactivity.

Those four days were a precious opportunity for hours of ideal quiet night sleep and for laid-back days, sometimes interrupted by cosmetic negotiating sessions. No one wanted to present any commodities to Mrs. Albright, for the simplest rules of politics dictates that one should wait for the boss and reach an understanding with him.

Those days were an ideal opportunity for the three delegations to catch their breath, stop and contemplate, think, and evaluate.

The Palestinian delegation, after long evaluation discussions, identified the following general conclusions:

\* The Summit formed (a ground work for prepared, and serious negotiations) of the kind that President Arafat called for prior to the Summit. Negotiators were

seriously and formally immersed in the main issues away from session of brainstorming and presumptions which were distinctive of the previous negotiating sessions. The two sides had to present their true positions (in its semi-final stage) after the general positions of each side was known to the other. True no agreement came about and no file was concluded, but any future negotiations would be based on what was said in Camp David and will pick up where the Summit left off, even if the gaps remain wide, and on some issues, they are very wide.

\* The Camp David Summit provided the Palestinians with an unprecedented forum to present the Palestinian version in its entirety and to present the Palestinian position in a definite, unambiguous way. At the end, this position had forced its respect.

It was very important to hear President Clinton tell President Arafat during one of the meetings, 'I did not know your needs and requirements as I know them now.'

Clinton was listening directly from Yasser Arafat to the complete Palestinian position in a fateful summit. No one was able to hide any part of the picture from the American President or make assumptions on what the Palestinians would accept or reject. At that point, the American President would discover that his team's evaluations were not at all precise. He would also realize that the 'goods' he was made to believe the Palestinian would be eager to buy, or forced to buy, did not even attract their attention. From the start they considered it to be spoiled Israeli goods.

\* The American 'discovery' of the limits of the Palestinian position also dawned on the Israeli delegation that had to break its false illusions and assumptions, formed by the mentality of the occupier, of the final settlement that the Palestinian side would accept.

\* The Camp David Summit revealed to the Palestinians that the Israeli establishment is not yet ready for a true peaceful settlement. The mentality of the occupier, settler and soldier was the one still drafting the outline of a settlement, and its drawing the portrait of 'peace' and future according to the Israeli point of view. More so, the prominent presence of mythology in the Israeli arguments sets off alarm bells.

\* The adoption by Israel of the most hard-line arguments of Jewish extremist regarding Al-Aqsa mosque formed a dangerous dimension foreshadowing - especially with the American adoption of the arguments- a region pushed into the abyss of explosion and continued religious conflict.

In general, the Israeli position was to reap every thing, the Palestinian 'golden' signature, for a final recognition, and the precious 'end of the conflict' for a cheap price. That is without a return of all the land and without acknowledging full



sovereignty and, most dangerous of all, without paying any price in the refugee issue.

The Americans, due to the positions they adopted, could not be an âhonest brokerâ or even a âbroker.â The unity of the positions of the Israeli delegation and the position of the American peace team, was casting a dark shadow over the possibility of moving forward towards a logical solution. True, President Clinton often listened with great attention and understanding to the Palestinian story, and it is true that on many occasions, and in front of the Palestinian delegation, he opposed the views of his advisors that seemed to provoke the Palestinian side, but in the end, he has his own calculations, limits, institutions, future and âCongress.â And so questions will continue to be asked about the feasibility of the American Administration to continue its diplomatic dependency on persons who have lost their credibility with the Palestinians and Arabs.

And in the midst of evaluations and analyses, every one was preoccupied with nerve-racking question, how would things go after Clinton's return to the retreat on Sunday?

Mrs. Albright tried hard to do something in the absence of her president. But it took her a day to get the sides to agreement to resume the committee meetings. She made several shuttle trips between âBirchâ where Arafat stayed, and âDogwoodâ where Barak stayed, (less than 50 meters separates the two cabins) to solve the problem of how many delegates will participate in the committee meetings. She exerted enormous effort to convince Barak to attend an official dinner in Laurel restaurant the day after Clinton's departure.

But the issue went deeper than preparations and formalities. The uproar and turbulence in the Israeli political arena reflected deeply on the deeply on the performance of the Israeli delegation.

The feeling of âdisappointmentâ among the Israeli delegation was noticeable and it was easy to conclude that the firm Palestinian rejection of the âAmerican ideasâ was like a massive bomb that blew away the American and Israel calculations.

An observe could easily realize that Barak and the American peace team were betting on passing the âAmerican ideaâ to the Palestinians (like it or hate it) and shape them into a framework agreement of which the end to the conflict would be the most important article. It seems that Barak had bet on returning to Israel triumphant with this document and threaten to go to the ballot box. And when their calculations did not come through, the Israelis felt embarrassed.

Barak isolated himself for two days in âDogwood.â He refused to receive

anyone from his delegation except for Danny Yatom and Gilad Sher. But the Israeli premier was not wasting time. He was in constant contact with the powers that be in Israeli politics. In addition, as an American source would confirm later, Barak was in touch with influential American Jews. And he also worked to restore his delegation by denying Israeli press reports that Shlomo Ben Ami and Amnon Lipkin-Shahak were pressuring him to make concession in Jerusalem.

In the midst of this, a reality that had taken hold since Barak's rise to power on the bandwagon of peace and development had emerged. Barak was unable to establish an appropriate work relationship with Yasser Arafat. Putting chemistry aside, there are factors that dictated the necessity of establishing a work relationship. Yasser Arafat was prepared for such a relationship after Barak's election victory. After Netanyahu's unproductive years, Abu Ammar wanted to make up the precious lost time. And though he was careful not to interfere in the 1999 Israeli general elections, he gave sufficient signals of his desire to see a victory by the peace camp led by Barak.

In their first meeting in September, on the same day Barak entered for the first time the prime minister's office after successfully creating a wide government coalition, he had the chance to present the Palestinians with the needed signal: a readiness to work as partners and to implement agreements.

Instead, what happened in that meeting did not indicate a return to the era of the unique relationship that distinguished Yitzhak Rabin tenure. Barak began to show a desire to evade implementing what Netanyahu had signed and he began to leak to the media his desire to link the Wye agreement with a framework agreement on the final status issues. The former chief of staff had remained loyal to his position when signing the Taba agreement: No more land should be given to the Palestinians before the signing of a final agreement.

In the months that followed that first meeting, and in spite of the signing of the Sharm El-Shiekh agreement, Barak's hesitation and evasion of implementing agreements he had signed raised concern within Arafat and built within him a feeling that there was no peace-making partner on the other side. For months, Arafat carefully watched Barak restrict himself politically and in the media, turning the transfer of three Arab villages, Abu Dis, Ezariyeh and east Sawahreh into a huge issue until it was finally settled in the Knesset.

Arafat's opinion, which he relayed to Barak and U.S. envoys, was why all make noise and create controversy over something Rabin, Peres and Netanyahu agreed to?

Arafat would say: "They want to skip the third West Bank withdrawal and

include it in the final agreement. Time would prove he was correct. Arafat would draw the attention of U.S. envoys to this matter, especially the attention of Mrs. Albright. He used to say to her: "You were a witness to the signing of the Sharm El-Sheik agreement, why don't you pressure him (Barak) to implement what he signed?"

An opportunity arrived during last spring for the start of a new work relationship between Arafat and Barak during their successive meetings in Ramallah and Tel Aviv. At a certain moment, it seemed that Barak began to realize the simplest requirements of a partnership, but this moment did not last long and disappeared in the midst of Barak's refusal to carry out a withdrawal from the three villages and carry out the third withdrawal in the West Bank. Not to mention the extreme positions that were introduced by his envoys in public and secret final status negotiations.

At Camp David, counting the two meetings in the first and last days of the Summit held with the presence of President Clinton in Aspen, Arafat and Barak met - but did not sit next to each other - at official dinner parties hosted by Clinton. On one occasion, Barak initiated a visit to Birch had had tea with Arafat. It was a regular meeting where specific political issues were not discussed. No other meeting between the two men whose cabins, which neighbored each other, formed the base of a triangle whose top was the American presidential lodge Aspen.

Albright had tried to relax the atmosphere when she hosted an official dinner the day after Clinton had left Camp David. But her attempt failed. The only new thing mentioned conveyed during that dinner was Albright's announcement that the American ideas were no longer on the table. That is, they were no longer a basis for negotiations.

Perhaps the announcement, which brought relief to the Palestinian side and considered it an achievement, also brought a sense of calculated relief on the part of the Israelis. With the withdrawal of the American ideas the possibility of some in the Israeli political arena to scoring points against had disappeared.

On Friday, Saturday, and Sunday, (July 21, 22, and 23) there had been a number of routine negotiating sessions that did not include anything new. Albright took the opportunity to invite President Arafat for lunch with her daughters and grandchildren in a farm she owns located two hours from Camp David. The next day, she invited Barak for a tour of Independence Park in Emmitsburg.

Time was slowly moving, but it was tense in its wait for Clinton's return.

At 6:25 Sunday evening, July 23, a helicopter landed at Camp David. Clinton immediately jumped into a golf cart and drove with his daughter Chelsea sitting next

to him to "Aspen." He was full of energy in spite of the long flight (from Japan). He waived to delegates he encountered in the pathways of Camp David and said: "Hi, I am back, lets get back to work."

Clinton immediately returned to work. After a session with his advisors, who constantly provided him with progress reports during his stay in Okinawa, he called for two meetings, one with Arafat and one with Barak. He had a specific proposal: We want intensive marathon negotiations. I want negotiators from each side to discuss every file (security, land, refugees and Jerusalem).

At 11 o'clock that evening, Clinton along with some advisors took part in a Palestinian-Israeli security session. The session lasted until 6 am.

In that session, the Israelis redefined their position regarding security on the eastern border. They kept talking about the "threat from the east" and what that requires in terms of an Israeli security presence along the border and in the Ghor. Here they stated their demands of running patrols along the Jordan River divide, the establishment of three early warning stations on West Bank land, the establishment of five Israeli "storage warehouses" in the Ghor area to be used by the Israeli army in cases of emergency. In addition, there was the demand for Israeli inspection of goods imported to the Palestinian territories and a demand for a demilitarized Palestinian state.

In response to this argument, President Arafat gave clear instructions to his negotiators who consulted with him twice that day, once at 3 am and again at 4:30 am. "We will not allow the presence of any Israeli soldier on the confrontation line in the Ghor, or at the crossings. These are sovereign Palestinian areas. The presence of any Israeli soldier there will render security invalid."

He further explained that if the Israelis were looking for "security" guarantees, we are ready and welcoming, and call for the presence of American or international troops in these areas.

President Clinton seemed to welcome this position.

Also, the Israeli restrictions and conditions regarding the arms of the Palestinian state were rejected.

Clinton insisted to begin intensive marathon negotiations, or the "last shot" marathon, with the security committee. He thought it was the committee that could make quick accomplishments. Because of this, he responded to the "hysterical" Israeli security demands. Perhaps he left this session feeling satisfied that he had somehow bridged the gaps between the two sides.

But after four and a half hours, reality would hit the American President, when he sat with the negotiators from the two sides to discuss refugees. The positions of

both sides were in a collision course.

The Palestinian position was clear and decisive. After a brief presentation about the root of the refugee dilemma, explained through a review in history of the Jewish invasion of Palestine, Palestinian negotiators asserted the following points:

- An insistence on the right of every Palestinian refugee to return home as stipulated in UN Resolution 194.

- Establishment of a mechanism to implement this right, and to begin the implementation with the return of refugees in Lebanon and then, establish a timetable, including numbers, for the return of all those who wish to do so.

The Palestinians then explained why they were giving priority to the refugees in Lebanon: "Their living conditions are dire, and they are linked through kinship with the Galilee which was obvious at the "Fatmah Gate" reunions in south Lebanon which was broadcast and dramatized the refugee issue.

- It would be possible, after the recognition of the right of return and the mechanism of implementing that right, to establish a process of compensation.

- A refusal to discuss the issue of Jews who left the Arab countries and their compensation.

In face of the Palestinian position, there was the classic Israeli argument: "We are not responsible for this (refugee) problem. We don't recognize the right of return. We are prepared to allow the return of thousands over several years within a "family reunification" program and "humanitarian reasons," we are ready to talk about an international compensation fund that would allocate compensation for Jews 'expelled' from Arab countries.

During that meeting, Clinton no doubt felt that the refugee issue is much more complicated than what his advisors had informed him. The advisors insisted that there was a possibility of making progress in the refugee committee based on compensation and relying in part on the resettling of refugees in the Palestinian state, or opening the door to immigration to Western countries.

This made Clinton decide to hold the meetings of the land committee on two levels. He met separately with both sides. The American President listened with interest to the Palestinian negotiators who produced maps to support their outline of the dangers of the Israeli demands of land annexation. In addition to being illegal and in contradiction with the references of the peace process, the annexation would destroy the geographic and demographic unity of the Palestinian territory and is designed to control Palestinian aquifers in the West Bank. The annexation would transform the Palestinian state into fragmented islands divided by Jewish settlement blocks. The Palestinian stressed that they reject the Israeli maps and any border

amendments must be equally in quantity and quality.

Negotiators dealing with Jerusalem were waiting for their turn in 'Aspen' but after the land committee had finished, the Americans had not yet set a date.

At 8 that evening, the telephone at 'Birch' rang. President Clinton would like to meet President Arafat at 'Aspen'.

From the first moment, the meeting was tense and stormy. Clinton's tone was sharp: America will wash her hands from the peace process and you shall bear the responsibility. We will freeze the bilateral relationship. The Congress will freeze aid allocated to you and you will live in isolation. You did not present any thing new regarding Jerusalem. The Israelis took steps forward.

Then it was Arafat's turn to respond. He spoke softly and after a few minutes his voice became sharp and thunderous. 'First of all, a revolution occurred in these talks, the sides have become more understanding and knowledgeable of each other's positions. We did not waste time here.

Arafat added: If any one had imagined that I might sign away Jerusalem, he is mistaken. I am not only the leader of the Palestinian people, I am also the vice president of the Islamic Summit and I defend the rights of Christians as well. I will not sell Jerusalem. And I will not allow for a delay in discussions on Jerusalem, not even for a minute. You say the Israelis moved forward, they are occupiers, they are not being generous, they are not giving from their pockets, they are giving from our land. I am only asking that UN Resolution 242 be implemented. I am only speaking about 22 percent of the Palestine, Mr. President.

Arafat went on, challenging and contradicting Israeli claims to Al Aqsa and in Jerusalem. Clinton continued attempts to pressure Arafat saying, you have what is reasonable, and what you can live with. You can establish a 'sovereign presidential complex' for you and the Palestinian state next to Al Aqsa Mosque.

'So there will be a small island surrounded by Israeli soldiers who control the entrances. This is not what we ask. We are asking for full Palestinian sovereignty on Jerusalem, occupied in 1967,' Arafat said.

In the middle of the argument, Clinton says, 'You did not present any thing. They (Israelis) took the initiative regarding Jerusalem.'

Arafat looked at the American President and asked, 'Do you want to attend my funeral? I will not relinquish Jerusalem and the holy places.'

A deep moment of silence prevailed. Then the dialogue continued with voices less sharp. Clinton proposed that all negotiators come to him to discuss Jerusalem.

The meeting ended with a handshake and Clinton telling Arafat, 'I respect your steadfastness, you are a believer.'

When Arafat returned to Brichâ and members of the Palestinian delegation read the minutes of the meeting, fascinated by the historical moment and firmness of their president, one after the other, they began to hug their president.

At 10 pm, Clinton was trying a last attempt. He sat with his assistants, Saeb Erekat and Sholom Ben Ami. Clinton began with the options facing the Summit (announcing the its failure, signing an agreement and postponing the issue of Jerusalem, signing an agreement and postponing discussions of parts of Jerusalem, issuing a statement that speaks in general terms of the flow of the negotiations and to indicate that negotiations between the two would continue).

Erekat said the fourth option was the most suitable. Then Sandy Burger said, that option was not standing!!! At that moment Clinton directed the discussion toward the central issue, Jerusalem. The old ideas had returned in new attire. But the truth war very clear. Israel wants to impose its sovereignty over the Aqsa mosque because they claim it is the site of the Second Temple. Israel wants Jews to be allowed to pray at the Aqsa compound, and rejects Palestinian sovereignty over most parts of Jerusalem. Instead, Israel proposed a series of different systems that would turn the city into a jungle of contradictory order where people will live in a never-ending hell.

Close to mid-night, Clinton said there was a final proposal regarding Jerusalem.

- A committee that included the Security Council, Morocco (as chair of the Jerusalem Committee) will grant the State of Palestine, âsovereign custodianshipâ of Al Aqsa mosque, while Israeli retains âall other sovereignty.â

- The Muslim and Christian Quarter sin the Old City would come under Palestinian sovereignty. The Jewish and Armenian Quarters would fall under Israeli sovereignty.

- The Palestinians will have functional sovereignty in what was called, the internal neighborhoods; Musrarah, Wadi Al Joz, Sheikh Jarrah, Ras al-Amoud, Al-Tour, Al-Suwaneh, and Salah el-Din Street.

- Palestinian sovereignty will extend to the external neighborhoods of Jerusalem. Palestinian sovereignty will cover the internal neighborhoods of Jerusalem, and a special system will be adopted in the Old City the details of which will be agreed on.

Clinton told Erekat to take the proposal to âhis leaderâ and come back with an answer.

âI can give you the answer now,â Erekat said immediately. âPresident Arafat instructed me not to accept any thing less than Palestinian sovereignty on all areas of Jerusalem occupied in 1967 and in the forefront, Al Aqsa Mosque.â

Clinton repeated: Take the proposal to President Arafat and get back to me.

The proposal did not need much discussion after Erekat returned to Birchâ and read it to the President and the Palestinian delegation. It became clear that there was a full adoption by the Americans of the Israeli position regarding Jerusalem. It was proposed that a letter be written to the American President stating the Palestinian response to the proposal and the entire Summit.

While the letter was being drafted, some members of the American peace team were frantic, telling the Palestinian delegation, 'it is a good proposal, convince the President to accept it. You can allow a very limited number of Jews to pray at the mosque. The proposal gives you huge gains.'

Those frantic officials were trying to delay the moment of truth. The fall of their desperate assumptions of the limits of the Palestinian position and the failure of the Summit they involved their President in.

When Erekat and Mohammed Dahlan went to Aspenâ at 1 am to hand the letter, President Clinton was standing in the wide hallway of his cabin. He listened to letter which Erekat began reading in translated English. The letter stated how valued President Clinton's efforts are, and the hope that the efforts will continue and stressed the Palestinian desire to continue with negotiations. The letter once again emphasized international terms of references as the basis for any agreement to be reached and pointed out that the proposals on Jerusalem are in contradiction with these references.

The answer: I expect this answer.

In the early morning of that day, July 25, the Camp David Summit designed to reach a final peace treaty between the PLO and Israel was officially over without the signing of an agreement, or to be more precise, it was ending in failure.

At 10:30 am July 25, Clinton received Arafat and Barak, in what was to be the final session, and presented them with a draft statement on the conclusion of the Summit.

Arafat spoke for a few minutes, giving his evaluation of the Summit, praised the role of President Clinton and expressed the PLO's desire to continue with the peace process. Barak spoke briefly and in general.

Half an hour later, Clinton was aboard his helicopter heading for a press conference at the White House to announce the failure of the Summit.

At the same time, Barak's motorcade was headed to the press center at Emmitsburg.

At 12:30, Arafat's motorcade descended from the Catoclin Mountains. It was the first time that members of the Palestinian delegation could see the retreat from a



distance. Some cabins looked like white spots that quickly disappeared when the cars left the gates of the retreat.

The negotiators took a deep sigh of relief when they left the place they had spent 15 difficult days at. As they looked out to the resort from the windows of their cars, they left there, hours of tension, wait and exhausting negotiations. They were carrying with them small memories and details of the place, the tress, the people and the events. But in their hearts they had treasured, moments and stances in which they shined. They had said a clear ånoå to the United States, while on the land of the United States. It was not a shallow ånoå,å nor was it for the sake of show or unfounded heroics. It was, a ånoå that was politically, nationally and historically positive and correct.

Within hours, a number of the Palestinian delegates were en route from the hotel in Virginia to Reagan Airport in Washington. They were on their way home.

They struck up a conversation with the driver whose features seemed to indicate he was Pakistani or Indian. When he realized that his passengers were Palestinian and were at the Camp David, Neyazi, the Pakistani driver said. å You were excellent. Jerusalem is ours. We should not give up any part of it. Arafat's position is great. Jerusalem is ours.å

When the delegates arrived at the airport and Neyazi closed the trunk of his car after unloading the suitcases, Neyazi made a fist and said, åBrothers, do not give up Jerusalem, do not give up Jerusalem.å







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