

Ehud Barak:

On the Record

Jun 3, 1997



Brief Analysis

Today, Israel's Labor Party elects a new leader, the first time neither Shimon Peres nor the late Yitzhak Rabin will head the party since the political revolution that followed the 1973 Yom Kippur War. Candidates include former Foreign and Interior Minister Ehud Barak, former Health Minister Ephraim Sneh, former Minister for the Peace Process Yossi Beilin, and former Ambassador to Spain Shlomo Ben Ami. Barak, a lifelong soldier and former chief of staff, is the strong favorite. Following are selections from recent (and not so recent) statements by him that may be indicative of his future intentions.

On Making Peace with the Palestinians "Separation is the only possible answer. . . [to] minimize the human friction between the two peoples and allow for mutual cooperation on economic ventures." —Washington Post, March 7, 1995

"[Separation] will, I believe, encourage the Palestinians to invest in their own economic infrastructure ...In my judgment it's better that know-how, knowledge, capital, raw materials and half-processed products will cross over the lines separating us from the Palestinians, rather than the working force, the labor, to produce them...I cannot see the kind of economic development in the Palestinian areas, in the West Bank and Gaza, if...terrorist activity will continue. As long as there is government money, you can force it to flow even if it's an unstable situation. But the future of the Palestinian economy has to ultimately be based on private or business community funds, be it Palestinian, or European or Israeli, and they will not step in unless a stable situation will prevail." —Addressing the International Press Institute, March 27, 1996

"The prerequisite for a stable Middle East is that we recognize the needs and sensitivities of our inevitable partners. They're going to be there forever. You don't choose your parents, and a people cannot choose its neighbors—especially when they came back from all around the globe to a certain piece of real estate. The question is: are we really going to settle [with the Palestinians], or are we going to manipulate the peace process to let us control them without appearing to? —New York Times, December 19, 1996

"I prefer a Palestinian confederation with Jordan but a Palestinian state may become a reality in the talks pertaining to the final stage agreements with the PLO Authority. —Shomron News Service, January 23, 1997

On Palestinian Terrorism "It is our judgment that there is a place for a coordinated international effort to increase the chances that the Palestinian Authority will live up to its commitments, by establishing or coordinating the demand—in the clear and loud voice of the international community of donors who backed and supported the Palestinian economy and the Palestinian infrastructure—to put a clear and loud demand to them to live up to their commitment about combating terrorism... It is clear to me that what had been done until now in order to convince the PA to combat effectively terror is not enough...We have no illusion that Arafat can provide 100 percent defense against terror, as we could not provide it. But it is clear to us...that in spite of the fact that there are some signs of activity on behalf of the Palestinian Authority, it falls short of what is really needed in order to stop the terrorist

activity. He can arrest people, he can interrogate people, he can run investigations about places where they hid their munitions, he can follow their exchanges of information, he can follow their movement, he can do what every other leader has done in the Middle East in order to fight terror... —Address to Ambassadors of the European Union and the Donor Countries, February 26, 1996

On Netanyahu's Peace Process Policy "...Without mutual trust, the process is liable to break down if the discussion on the permanent status is brought forward." —Israel Radio, March 20, 1997

"Perhaps he [Netanyahu] wants the Americans to mediate? The problem is, that the American map of the region is more like Arafat's than ours." —Jerusalem Post, March 28, 1997

"He's [Netanyahu] even managed to put Jerusalem at the top of the agenda. Look at Har Homa. Has that strengthened us? It has weakened Israel's status and united the world behind the Arab position. He has ruined the trust between Israel and the Palestinians, the very foundation on which everything rested..Once you lose trust, you lose your credibility. He [Netanyahu] says to them 'that's all I can give,' then he folds under pressure. This tempts the Palestinians to inflame the situation, in the hope of obtaining more from [him] under pressure." —Jerusalem Post, March 28, 1997 ,

On Making Peace with Syria "I would be satisfied with Yitzhak Rabin's formula: depth of withdrawal as the depth of peace. Or the formula I proposed: depth of withdrawal as the depth of peace and the quality of the defense arrangements.—Haaretz Magazine, October 4, 1996 "If Assad has adapted to assure us peace, as with Holland and Belgium, then there is something to talk about. But if he can't—and he can't—then it isn't at all clear he will obtain full withdrawal." —Haaretz Magazine, October 4, 1996

On Relations with the Arab World ". . . I never hated any Arab, either those that I killed or those who killed my best friends. We were in a mission for the last two generations to defend the creation and establishment of our own entity, and I can speak for many other Israelis, that there's never been any hatred for Arabs. I wish that on the Arab side there was a kind of change of attitude toward Israel." —New York Times, May 21, 1996

On Relations with the United States "If I would accumulate the whole set of Memorandums of Understanding that we already have with the United States, the overall rate will be the equivalent of quite a deep commitment on both sides to cooperate, and a kind of commitment of America to basically support the military capability of Israel. We have made the principle of self-reliance a cornerstone of our policies. We never asked anyone to come to fight for us, and we intend never to ask anyone to come to fight for us." —Remarks to the Diplomatic Corps, Jerusalem, December 13, 1995

This report was prepared by Hillary Ebenstein.

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