

Israel State Archives - ארכיון המדינה

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A joint project with Dodis, Diplomatic Documents of Switzerland, on Moshe Dayan's visit to Switzerland, December 1978

Two and a half months after the summit at Camp David, peace talks between Israel and Egypt had stalled. Although the Israeli government had approved a draft peace treaty, Egypt raised further demands and Anwar Sadat and Menachem Begin exchanged letters, each blaming the other for the hold up. Foreign Minister Moshe Dayan took advantage of the break to visit his Swiss colleague, the activist Foreign Minister Pierre Aubert. 40 years after this visit, Dodis, the Swiss database and publication on diplomatic documents, has issued a publication including four documents from the Israel State Archives (<https://goo.gl/a3hiXf>). This joint project reflects the growing tendency towards a transnational approach, providing us with multiple perspectives on historical events. Together with the reports of the Israeli Foreign Ministry (in Hebrew with a German translation) we find a Swiss report, illustrating both Israeli-Swiss relations and the interest of Aubert and his staff in the peace negotiations in the Middle East.

According to the Foreign Ministry report, Dayan told Aubert about Sadat's dilemma whether to sign the treaty in the face of Arab opposition and the unrest in Iran (which was soon to bring down the Shah and to end in the Islamic revolution). In his view Israel could sign the treaty, and the remaining problems were caused by Sadat's desire to show that he was not undermining Arab solidarity or abandoning the Palestinians. But if Jordan, supported by Saudi Arabia, refused to join the talks, Israel could do little on the Palestinian issue. Aubert asked if Israeli declarations about new settlements and Jerusalem did not contribute to these problems, and Dayan said that they contained nothing new.

Dayan added that neither Egypt nor the US wanted a Palestinian state which would turn to the USSR. It would be hard for Sadat to give up the peace agreement and his ties with the US, and the Egyptian people and the Army supported peace. Thus he still hoped that Sadat would sign. Later Aubert thanked Dayan for his candour and promised to do all he could to help. He would speak to the Egyptian ambassador and ask him to encourage Sadat to make peace.

The Israeli documents are in the following file on the ISA website: <https://goo.gl/qZ1gtn>. See also the collection of files on Making Peace with Egypt, 1978-1979: <https://goo.gl/cQBPyF> and the following post in the Dodis FB page: <https://goo.gl/ys7Mma>

In the photo: Pierre Aubert. Photograph: Erling Mandelmann, Wikimedia

