

Letters to the editor  
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The Post says (9/6/91) that "(t)he plain American advantage lies in exploiting the changes in the international and regional environment" in the Middle East by withholding the promised support for housing the multitude of Jews allowed to leave the USSR largely as a result of the successful U.S. campaign.

For us to do what Israel is doing we would have to accept an annual emigration roughly the size of Italy's total population and they try to house it.

What actual changes? Is there one less Arab tyranny? Has any of of those states - or the PLO - <sup>g i</sup>recognized Israel's right to exist within secure borders? The Post has adopted the administration's mythology. There have been no changes, all those states and the PLO remain officially dedicated to Israel's destruction, yet they <sup>blackmails</sup> U.S. pressures Israel?

Not Assad, who told the Post he won't got to any peace conference unless he obtains in advance what he wants, what ostensibly is to be negotiated <sup>ed.</sup>

The Post describes this blackmail as "the obvious way to serve American interests in the region as a whole." This would be true only if American interests are served by protecting all those murderous Arab tyrannies while we proclaim our devotion to deomsracy.

Those "four poisonous decades" to which the Post refers were poisonous because those defeated in wars refuse to end them, refuse to recognize the State of Israel, insist that to the loser belongs the victory.

There is a greater likelihood that U.S. pressures in its pro-Arab tilt can lead to anothrr holocaust than to any "Middle East Prize."

Harold Weisberg



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## Middle East Prize

A GREAT PRIZE dangles before the Middle East, and especially before Israel, thanks to the United States. An American-organized peace conference bringing Israel the face-to-face talks it long has sought with its hostile neighbors could meet as early as October. Meanwhile, Washington is preparing to make possible, through loan guarantees, the sum of \$10 billion (in addition to the usual \$3 billion in annual aid) to help Israel settle the flood of Soviet Jewish immigrants. Peace and new resources: These are bounties of a scale the Israelis have only been able to dream of so far.

It comes, then, as an astonishment that some narrowly focused Israelis seem ready to put these potential fruits at risk. The Likud government is resisting American formulas—formulas that at least half the Israeli electorate finds fair—for representation at a peace conference by non-PLO Palestinians competent to speak for their community. The government is also resisting President Bush's principled insistence that Israel halt new settlements in the occupied West Bank.

On his more severe days, Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir appears prepared to spoil the projected peace conference, which he sees as

promising a less desirable result for Israel than simply holding on to occupied territory. He also appears to hope to use the political favor that Israel enjoys in the United States and the deserved popularity of the cause of Soviet Jews to ensure that Congress overwhelms any presidential hesitation in the matter of the new loans.

No on a peace conference and on a halt to West Bank settlements, but yes on old aid and new loans? This combination may suit Israel's Likud government, but it cannot possibly suit the United States. The plain American advantage lies in exploiting the changes in the international and regional environment that have made possible a defusing of the tensions that have caused war after Arab-Israeli war for four poisonous decades. This is not only the obvious way to serve American interests in the region as a whole. It is also the best way for the United States to make good on its obligations of fidelity to the security and welfare of Israel.

Some speak of a coming American-Israeli showdown. But the notion that the large and enlightened purposes of American policy should be made hostage to a petty test of wills between the two friendly governments ought to be regarded as too absurd and too dangerous to entertain.