

# 'Carter's success' from the Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung (21 September 1978)


**Caption:** On 21 September 1978, German daily newspaper Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung praises US President, Jimmy Carter, for his initiative and for his role as a mediator in support of the conclusion, four days earlier at Camp David (Maryland), of the Middle-East peace agreements between Egypt and Israel.

**Source:** Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung. Zeitung für Deutschland. Hrsg. Eick, Jürgen; Welter, Erich; Fack, Fritz Ullrich; Deschamps, Bruno; Fest, Joachim; Reißmüller, Johann Georg. 21.09.1978, Nr. 206. Frankfurt/Main: FAZ Verlag GmbH. "Carters Erfolg", auteur:Reifenberg, Jan , p. 1.

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## Carter's success

*by Jan Reifenberg*

The Camp David summit meeting has been a success for President Jimmy Carter. It will certainly be useful to him in foreign relations and it could also help to smooth over a number of internal political difficulties. During the 13 days of the Camp David negotiations, criticism of the President in Congress and from the American public, which had up to now been both vociferous and overly hasty, fell silent. An old Anglo-American rule was once again confirmed: at crucial moments, in times of crisis, the nation stands behind the head of state. Democrats and Republicans have proved that the bi-partisan unity in foreign and security policy that has given rise to all the great decisions since the War is still possible. They allowed President Carter all the time he needed and gave his endeavours their approval. They kept in check both their inquisitiveness and their urge to make public pronouncements, keeping silent when some of them discovered a small chink in the thick blanket of secrecy that surrounded the Catocin Mountains.

President Carter had deliberately lowered expectations for the Camp David negotiations. He admitted from the outset that failure at the summit conference would inflict serious political damage on him. Here was an appeal to the Americans' natural sympathy for the 'guy with his back to the wall', and also a means of securing his position should the results be only modest. However, for several days it seemed that any kind of positive outcome could be ruled out. Sadat and Begin got caught up in the contradictions and antagonisms inherent in such concepts as Sinai, Gaza and the West Bank. On Thursday of last week, the Egyptian Head of State was ready to leave Camp David but Jimmy Carter managed to avert this drastic step. The engineer in the President was still convinced that the individual parts of a peace plan could be assembled. And Carter the idealist appealed to the religious convictions of his guests. The leader of the most powerful Western nation used his country's political weight to tip the hypersensitive scales. When specialists on both sides threatened to be overwhelmed by detail, Carter brought along his own ideas, put neatly down on paper overnight. With accomplished patience, the President listened to his guests' arguments in their log cabins.

The President did not slacken his efforts. For Carter it was not just a matter of US national interests, which are always at stake in relation to crude oil supplies, currency issues and geostrategy in the Near East: he was also committed to bringing together once again, for the sake of peace, two men whose personal courage he admired. It was not easy for Carter to play the role of 'full partner' in the negotiations with the requisite even-handedness because this concept is interpreted differently in Cairo and Jerusalem. Carter had to show caution and courage in walking the narrow dividing line between regard for Israel's security interests (to which a powerful group in the US Congress and among the American public remains committed) and the need to maintain links, not only for present purposes, with the Arab states. That is what the President succeeded in doing at Camp David.

Carter is under no illusion that peace in the Near East is imminent. Talks with Sadat and Begin, held separately for the most part, have brought home to him once again the intensity and extent of the difficulties. Those scenes, so moving for spectators and participants alike, of the two adversaries embracing in the East Room of the White House were scarcely over when the rift between the Heads of Government of Egypt and Israel yawned once again in the interpretation of crucial points in the two 'framework agreements'. Begin has let it be known that he has no intention of agreeing to the evacuation of 'Judea and Samaria', that he has not even tied himself to halting Israeli settlement activity during the five-year interim period. The question of the political future of the million-plus Palestinians remains unanswered.

Carter knew that before he invited the two to Camp David. Had he despaired at that stage, the silence between Cairo and Jerusalem might well have prompted another war. Carter did not approach his job as intermediary like a latter-day Woodrow Wilson, his awareness of the facts obscured by idealism: he brought very real diplomatic pressure to bear. His true feat was to have used that pressure in a subtle way, inducing each party to shift its position through his interpretation of the other's thought processes.

But now the real work begins. The visit of Secretary of State Cyrus Vance to Jordan and Saudi Arabia will be the curtain raiser. Menachem Begin must demonstrate that he does not intend to perform a U-turn once

again on his return to Israel. Anwar Sadat must assert himself with his Arab colleagues. Both of them are relying on President Carter. Both know that all the hopes can collapse like a house of cards over details. Henry Kissinger, architect of the first Sinai agreements, thinks that, in the final analysis, Presidents are not measured by their success or failure in opinion polls. With an undertaking like Camp David, the heart of the matter is elsewhere. There are already voices in Congress calling for President Carter to be awarded the Nobel Peace Prize. If it were awarded for sheer effort, Jimmy Carter would deserve it. He has at the very least succeeded in getting the two adversaries talking again. What happens next also depends on him. Anyone who has observed him over the last few days knows that the President himself remains modest about his contribution. Before Camp David, many of his opponents had frequently interpreted that modesty as weakness. Now they know better.