

GEORGE McGOVERN: "EAGLETON AFFAIR"
STEEL & BRUZONSKY: MIDEAST WARNINGS/JOHN CHANCELLOR: NO DIPLOMACY

JANUARY 31, 1978: ONE DOLLAR BIWEEKLY

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POLITICKS

& OTHER HUMAN INTERESTS



"Well, back to the old drawing board."

(Apologies to Peter Arno)



Cover drawing by Sam Whitehead

POLITICKS & OTHER HUMAN INTERESTS

ISSUE SEVEN: JANUARY 31, 1978

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EDITOR'S NOTE

Senator George McGovern has written his autobiography, *Grassroots*, which Random House will publish next month. It is a compelling book, aggressive and apologetic, defiant and defensive, naïve and candid. It tells more about its author than the usual confessionals of those who have races yet to run and careers to cap. Perhaps most interesting is McGovern's chapter on the "Eagleton matter": how he chose Missouri Senator Thomas Eagleton as his 1972 running mate and how he then reconsidered, two decisions that bracketed the most important development of the McGovern-Nixon contest. Our exclusive condensation of that chapter begins on page 13. As McGovern says, still with bitterness after five years, "it—not Watergate, not Vietnam, not the American economy—was the political story of 1972."

What McGovern does not say is that it is an important story today because it demonstrates once again what we (especially in activist circles) often try to forget: the importance of personality in politics. The movement of social forces, the fluctuation of indicators, the substance of issues create the context for decision, but the character of individuals, of people engaged in public affairs from the grass roots to the White House, makes a big difference. McGovern's two decisions played a key role in the Nixon landslide of 1972—and, he admits, "clouded and confused [his] own previous public credibility."

As you will read, the McGovern account also reveals his reluctance to use power—curious in a man who has sought the most powerful office in the world. For us, it forces a comparison to the ever-ruthless Richard Nixon. He too had a fatal flaw, revealed by a single decision: So possessed by his fear of oblivion yet so committed to his own downfall was Nixon, that he taped for posterity a record of his conversations in private meetings! Presumably, he had additional and nefarious reasons (political blackmail?) for the tapings, but it was an excess of the lust for immortality which more than any other force precipitated not only his resignation, but the collapse of his entire Administration.

Are we today witnessing the same phenomenon—that "character is fate"—in the excessive caution of President Carter? His decision to run his campaign and most of his Administration according to Pat Caddell's opinion

polls may someday answer that. Even now, it seems fair to ask: When will there be an issue for which this devout man will, despite the polls, risk everything? Anything?

At our request, Senator Eagleton read Senator McGovern's chapter and sent us the following comment:

"Senator McGovern's autobiography contains his memories of 1972. If I ever get around to writing my autobiography, it will most likely contain my memories of that year. Until then, I think the most accurate published account of the events of that year, as I recall them, will be found in Theodore White's book, *The Making of the President—1972*. In preparing Chapter 8, 'The Eagleton Affair,' Mr. White interviewed the principal participants in depth, and I feel that Mr. White presented a balanced portrayal of my selection by Senator McGovern as the Vice-Presidential candidate."

As we write this before Christmas, elated Egyptians and euphoric Israelis are sitting down to talk in Cairo. They will reconvene (in Cairo or elsewhere) after the New Year. Caution as well as hope come from our article on page 18 by Mark Bruzonsky, the 30-year-old lawyer, journalist, and scholar who first appeared in *Politicks* as the interviewer of George Ball. Bruzonsky was on assignment for us in Cairo just before Sadat announced he might go to Israel, and was attending an international convention in Tel Aviv the day Sadat made it official. The Israeli convention host asked Bruzonsky to return to Cairo, visit Sadat, and bring back the message of peace Sadat was preparing for the convention. Our man made the round trip, serving as courier for the first official message in 30 years from an Arab leader to a citizen's meeting in Israel.

Bruzonsky is an associate editor of *Worldview* magazine and a research associate at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, affiliated with Georgetown University. His journalism often appears in *The Christian Science Monitor*, *The National Jewish Monthly*, *The Washington Post*, and *Worldview*, as well as magazines published in Israel and the Arab world.

as Vice President without further relapses. When I asked him what the risks would be should Tom have to take over the Presidency, he said, "I don't like to think about that prospect." He then added that the danger of a recurrence was always present and that such persons ordinarily experience more difficulty as they get older. In responding to the same question, the other doctor said that he was surprised Eagleton had been able to withstand his duties in the Senate and the first week of controversy surrounding his Vice-Presidential candidacy. Perhaps he could stand up to an even greater test, but "that would make me most uncomfortable," the doctor said.

The Last Straw

I had gone to the meeting frustrated with the Eagleton situation and his conduct in recent days. I was nearly certain that he should withdraw. After conferring with the doctors, I had no doubt. But I also knew that if I so much as hinted publicly about the doubts concerning his future mental stability, he would not leave the ticket. Indeed, when I returned to the discussion with Nelson and Eagleton, the latter said bluntly that if I or any of my aides publicly raised the issue of his health at any point, he would fight me "right through to November."

He then handed me a statement asserting that

while health was not the issue, it had so diverted attention from the true problems before the nation that I was, therefore, asking him to resign. He proposed to respond with an explanation that while he did not share my view of the matter, he was resigning in the interests of party harmony. It was, he repeated, the only condition under which he would resign.

'I Did What I Had To'

I did what I had to, but the Eagleton matter ended whatever chance there was to defeat Richard Nixon in 1972.

Two months later Eagleton was the honoree at the Truman Day Awards Dinner in St. Louis and I was the principal speaker. He and his wife, Barbara, Eleanor and I, and Frank Mankiewicz had a private dinner beforehand in a suite at the Chase Park Plaza Hotel. In the midst of a discussion of Watergate, Barbara Eagleton interjected, "You know, George, Tom is now the most popular politician in America." Later I asked Tom if he would make a television commercial for me. He said no.

In a post-election interview, Tom described the trouble over the Vice-Presidential nominee as no more than "one rock in the landslide." Perhaps that is true, but landslides begin with a single rock. □

SPECIAL REPORT

ISRAELI OPINION FORESHADOWS COMPROMISE OR NEW COALITION

By Mark Bruzonsky

Concerned Americans watching and waiting as the Sadat-Begin drama intensifies may have missed a critical point: Israeli public opinion could well decide the fate of the Middle East negotiations. If Menahem Begin does not change his West Bank and Palestinian policies sufficiently, political pressure could fracture the Prime Minister's six-month-old coalition. Ironically, the downfall of the ruling Likud Party may be one consequence of the peace initiative for which the world has heralded its leader, Menahem Begin.

As of late December, Begin's lifelong posture had shifted slightly. But some critics in Israel and the Arab countries contended that his concessions involving "self-rule" or "local autonomy" were little more than his old insistence, repackaged, that Israel must retain security control and settlement rights in what he terms Samaria and Judea. "I stand by my principles [which] are so well known I [need] not elaborate on them," Begin told an interviewer a few weeks ago. And after the unsuccessful Christmas summit, it was apparent that he had not significantly changed those principles, even though he had revealed a certain tactical flexibility.

Whether members of Begin's coalition and the opposition parties will combine in the coming months to mount a serious challenge to Begin's authority is impossible to say. But the odds have certainly increased dramatically. On the one

hand, the Begin hard-liners resist bold new Palestinian policies and, on the other hand, supporters of West Bank territorial concessions are increasingly outspoken.

Even before Christmas, the opposition Labor Party had begun—however hesitantly—a serious re-evaluation of its former positions. And Begin's own Foreign Minister, Moshe Dayan, and his Deputy Prime Minister, Yigal Yadin, had shown that they could stray from Begin's positions.

Begin had to assert control by publicly insisting that all of Dayan's statements be cleared with him in advance, by reminding Yadin that he is not a Government spokesman on foreign policy, and by ordering a group of coalition members in the Knesset to cease their efforts to form a pressure bloc for major West Bank territorial concessions. At Ismailia, a growing rift between Begin and Dayan was widely reported.

In short, Americans following Middle East developments need to understand that throughout Israeli society there is an unprecedented reassessment of attitudes toward Palestinians and the West Bank. "There is wide national consensus for a boldly imaginative peace policy," *The Jerusalem Post* noted shortly after Sadat left Israel. Yet, *The Post* added, "The existing consensus is currently being distorted by the predominance of one relatively small faction—Mr. Begin's own—in the shaping of foreign policy."

It has even become thinkable that a new coalition could emerge uniting the Labor Alignment, the Democratic Movement for Change (which joined the Begin Government only a few months ago), and factions that went with the Likud Party to create Begin's Government last June.

Former Foreign Minister Yigal Allon, for ex-

ample, bluntly predicted after Sadat's visit that "either the Begin Government will have to make a fundamental change in its policy, or the Israeli people will change the composition of its Government." And in a *Politicks* interview, opposition Labor Party leader Shimon Peres broke with former Labor attitudes and accepted the basic concept of "Palestinian national existence"—even though he still opposed a totally independent Palestinian entity.

The Begin Government has begun to speak with somewhat greater sensitivity of the "Palestinian Arab problem" (as opposed to its former terminology—"the Arabs of the Land of Israel"). But its positions so far have offered little hope for compromise on the basic issues of Palestinian identity and West Bank control. This was pre-empted in another *Politicks* interview with Ephraim Evron, the Director-General of the Israeli Foreign Ministry, who is second there only to Moshe Dayan. (When the Cairo talks are elevated to the Foreign Minister level, Evron is one of the men expected to accompany Dayan.)

Peres hinted at the emerging differences with the Begin Government in his Knesset speech which followed those of Sadat and Begin. "Let us not hide from it, let us not disregard it, we are aware of the existence of the Palestinian identity," Peres declared. "Every people has the right to decide its own identity and this does not depend on the authorization of another nation."

The following are excerpts from this magazine's interview with Peres in early December 1977:

BRUZONSKY: Why is it so impossible for Israelis to accept the idea of Palestinian national existence?

PERES: We accept it.

BRUZONSKY: You accept the idea of Palestinian national existence?

PERES: That's right. . . . Every nation can decide about its identity. If there are Arabs who consider themselves Palestinians it is their decision, not mine. And they don't have to have my approval; my disapproval is meaningless.

The question is if the Palestinian Liberation Organization is a representative or terrorist organization. . . . If people want to discuss, let them keep their guns under Government control. Because the moment they come with guns they don't represent, they threaten. That's number one.

Number two. [The PLO] Charter is not for Palestinian nationhood. . . . They claim Israel is Palestine. . . . The PLO doesn't say, "We are Palestinian people, and for that recognize our people." That would be OK. They say Israel is Palestine. So we are playing ping-pong on two different tables.

Number three. To make them a partner means to select a partner who is against an agreement, while we have the people we live with, and we have the Jordanians, and with them we can and should conclude a negotiation.

Number four. When two peoples, two nations, are living on the very same land it is accepted by the civilized world that there is more than one solution. There can be a territorial solution, there can be a federal solution.

BRUZONSKY: What if, as you say, West Bank Arabs come to the negotiations and announce that it is their intention and their goal to negotiate for the creation of a Palestinian state?

PERES: We shall talk with them and explain to them that there must be compromise on both sides.

As far as I am concerned, I will tell the Palestinians and the Jordanians: "My dear friends, there are two possible compromises; either a geographic one—and that's partition, but not along the lines that you are seeking—or alternatively, a federal arrangement, namely to divide the Government instead of dividing the land."

I maintain that there will be many Arabs who will think "let us have a partial control on a larger piece of land [rather] than complete control on a partial piece of land."

BRUZONSKY: In principle you do not oppose the opening position of a demand for a Palestinian state?

PERES: I can't oppose anything. I say this is a negotiation without prior conditions. Everybody can come with his ideas, provided he will be a free

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agent, and a free representative of his people not terrorized by the PLO with threats to his life.

I'm obviously and truly for a confederation between Jordan and ourselves over the West Bank which would give the West Bankers sort of their own parliament and government, which in my judgment is the best solution.

I'm for a government with three levels: the municipal one which exists, a regional one which we have to create, and a federal one which we also have to create . . . whereby Israel would be satisfied with her security problems and the Arabs and Palestinians and Jordanians would be satisfied with their self-expression.

BRUZONSKY: *If the PLO accepts Resolution 242, and if the PLO agrees to the idea of reaching a co-existence arrangement with Israel, what would be your attitude toward the PLO?*

PERES: Then they would stop being the PLO. Then we wouldn't have a problem.

Let's face it, we don't object to the PLO just because they killed people. Actually, we are dealing with people who killed Jewish people on the West Bank. But the PLO is an organization to transform the Jewish majority with an Arab majority and to destroy the State of Israel. If they stop doing that they will stop being the PLO.

At the end of the interview, Peres characterized his new views as "quite a major difference" from Begin's. So did Evron, who called the views "extremely different" from past Labor Party policies. Evron himself attempted to be convincing on the negotiability of everything, but made it clear that the Likud Government intended to stand firm on the basic issues.

The following are excerpts from *Politicks'* interview with Evron in early December 1977:

BRUZONSKY: *Are you ready to discuss the issue of a Palestinian state in the upcoming negotiations in Cairo or Geneva?*

EVRON: We are ready to discuss everything. We are even ready to discuss the future of Jerusalem and of Judea and Samaria and so on, but we have positions.

BRUZONSKY: *There seems a definite shift in the Likud's policy. Foreign Minister Dayan was in Washington a few months ago and said if any Palestinian spokesman said either that he was coming to negotiate for a Palestinian state or that he represented the PLO, there would be no discussions and Israel would walk out.*

EVRON: If they want to raise it we shall say, "No," right away there and then to the idea of a Palestinian state. There can be no doubt about it, the Government and the great majority of the opposition members of the Knesset are totally opposed to the idea of a separate, independent Palestinian state. We will not walk out of a conference (if this demand comes up), but at the same time we will not give an inch on that.

BRUZONSKY: *Well, everybody comes to negotiations saying we won't give an inch on this; we won't change our position on this.*

EVRON: I don't want there to be any misunderstanding about this. Some people will say that because they will not walk out of a conference when people raise the problem this means they are willing to compromise. On this I want you to be quite clear. Nobody in the Government and I think nobody even in the Labor Party, is willing to accept the idea of a separate Palestinian state.

BRUZONSKY: *So the difference in policy from a few months ago is that instead of saying you will walk out of such a conference, you will stay there, you will hear the demands, and you will simply say no.*

EVRON: That is right, as far as the idea of a Palestinian state is concerned.

BRUZONSKY: *Does the Government accept the view Shimon Peres stated in his Knesset speech the day Sadat spoke?*

EVRON: This Government does not accept the Labor Party view. . . . I don't agree with his for-

mulation. We say that there is a Palestinian Arab problem. . . . As far as giving any sovereignty, any independent status, to a Palestinian entity, the Government is opposed to it.

What happened at Ismailia, however, made it clear that Sadat was also standing firm, and that his speech before the Knesset did not conceal a desire to strike a separate deal with Israel. His words deserve repeating: "As for the Palestinian cause, nobody could deny that it is the crux of the entire problem. Nobody in the world today could accept slogans propagated here in Israel, ignoring the existence of the Palestinian people. The Palestinian people are entitled to legitimate rights, and the Palestinian people is the core and essence of the conflict, and so long as it continues to be unresolved, the conflict will continue to aggravate, reaching new dimensions. In all sincerity, I tell you, there can be no peace without the Palestinians. It is a grave error of unpredictable consequences to overlook or brush aside this cause."

It is understandable that Begin's Government has not yet accepted the idea of dealing with "Palestinian nationalism" rather than "Palestinian Arabs." Begin first had to determine how little Egypt would accept. Now Begin may have to reconcile himself to a compromise. For the time being, Begin hopes that some form of "functional" approach to the West Bank, some way of "granting autonomy" to the West Bankers, will satisfy Sadat if not the other Arab parties.

But this marginally altered approach may not succeed. Then, at the very least, the Palestinians will probably have to be offered a limited form of self-determination.

If the Begin Government persists with its formula, peace may have to await the assumption of power by another political coalition in Israel. □

AGRINOMICS

LESSON OF FARM STRIKE: START OVER WITH THE SUN

By Barry Commoner

The American farmer is in trouble. On December 14 thousands of them went on strike, refusing to produce the food on which the country and their livelihood depend. This was an act of desperation; not so much a realistic strategy as a cry of anguish.

While the strike reflects particularly bad conditions in wheat-growing areas, this is only the most acute aspect of the general plight of agriculture. Each year farmers handle more money but keep less of it; in the first nine months of 1977, production costs rose 4 percent while market prices declined 7 percent. Farms are more vulnerable to losses whenever the fluctuating agricultural commodity market falls too far—as it often does. The strike is a warning to the rest of the country that something must be done soon to enable a farm family to help feed the nation, and yet feed itself.

The striking farmers are desperate because they seem to be alone in this struggle, largely ignored by the Government and the public. When the steel, textile, or shoe industry complains about foreign competition, Federal officials and union leaders respond. But as the farm strike has developed, few speeches have been made in Congress, scattered articles have appeared in the

Barry Commoner's most recent book is The Poverty of Power: Energy and the Economic Crisis (Bantam).

press—and city dwellers have continued to shop in well-stocked food stores, unaware that families who have helped supply them are on the verge of bankruptcy.

It is not surprising that most Americans seem to be insensitive to the farmers' plight, for their own troubles leave little room for anyone else's. With the economy in a long decline, the steelworker, the black teenager, and people living on shrinking incomes are unlikely to ponder the predicament of a Kansas farm family.

But farmers are fighting the same economic forces that throw steelworkers out of work; that deprive black teenagers of the hope of a job; that steadily impoverish the country's older people, and that erode the value of the dollar.

What ties everyone together in this struggle is the energy crisis, which, contrary to conventional wisdom, is not a distant threat but an immediate reality. It is true that Kansas farmers want a higher price for their grain. But what is driving them toward bankruptcy is the progressive rise in the cost of agricultural production—with the escalating price of energy leading the way.

Debt and Taxes

By 1975 farmers were paying 101 percent more for propane than they did in 1970, 253 percent more for nitrogen fertilizer, and 67 percent more for pesticides. Farm production costs, which increased at an average annual rate of 5.6 percent

in the 10 years before 1973, have since increased at an average annual rate of 11.5 percent. And while costs have steadily increased, the farmers' selling price has, as usual, fluctuated wildly, falling in the last few years to the point of squeezing the grain farmer up against the inexorably rising costs of production.

The National Energy Plan, Congress's proposed modifications, and particularly Secretary of Energy James Schlesinger's "compromise" proposals can only worsen this situation. Apart from ensuring a more rapid rise in the price of energy, the main effect of the National Energy Plan would be to greatly increase the production of electricity by speeding the construction of nuclear power plants, and by doubling the production of coal (most of which would be used to produce electricity). The Plan would reduce the contribution of domestic oil and natural gas production to the energy budget and use taxation to encourage industry to switch from these fuels to coal.

Unfortunately, there is little that a farmer can do with coal. Nearly every energy-using task on the modern farm requires an oil- or natural-gas-based product. With the Plan in effect, these forms of energy are precisely the ones that would be in the lowest supply—causing shortages and even higher prices for the farmer.

These steps would also aggravate another of the farmer's problems—a growing debt. Much of it is incurred by buying \$15,000 tractors, \$50,000 combines, and the rest of the heavy equipment that makes farming more capital-intensive than all but one manufacturing industry (petroleum refining).

All of this is bound to make it harder for farmers to raise the capital they need to operate efficiently. In practical terms, if the National Energy Plan were adopted, farmers would find it harder to get loans, because the banks' capital would be grabbed up by the equally hard-pressed, but much more powerful, utilities and coal companies.

The farmers are in an economic bind which the National Energy Plan will make much worse. The Plan, and all of its recent variations, are not