

'Need for success' forcing Carter's Geneva optimism

LESS than a week before Secretary of State Cyrus Vance left for the Mid-east, a delegation of Arab ambassadors met with him.

They expressed anxiety about President Carter's Mid-east policy in light of statements made and attitudes expressed during Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin's visit.

As was to be expected, Vance offered assurances that the Carter Administration's policy remained unaltered. The U.S. government is, in fact, hoping to reconvene the Geneva conference toward the end of the year he told the assembled, and in some cases rather sceptical, ambassadors.

Informed opinion in the U.S. is beginning to wonder whether the Carter Administration feels in need of a "foreign policy success" and will settle for an image of progress in the Mid-east. This might explain what many see as the President's excessive optimism about Geneva.

The Carter people are now planning for Geneva in a completely different way than before. The goal has become to "get the process started," hoping that Arab willingness to make peace with Israel will force from Begin concessions he has not so far even hinted at offering. The plan now is to seek agreement only on a procedural framework for Geneva in advance, not the principles to gov-

WASHINGTON NEWS

Special to the Saudi Gazette

By Mark A. Bruzonsky

ern discussions or the overall parameters of a possible settlement.

This new strategy is nearly a complete reversal from the prior one in which Geneva was thought of as a public forum to announce and to legitimise what would be largely agreed upon before hand through quiet diplomacy. The risks of what could follow failure at Geneva were thought excessive by many in the past. But now the risk of complete stalemate seems even greater.

Harsh editorial

The opinion is frequently expressed in the U.S. that Mid-east policy is now being strongly influenced by Hamilton Jordan, Assistant to the President (mostly for political affairs), and Stuart Eizenstat, Presidential Assistant for Domestic Affairs. Neither is a foreign policy expert. And this reflects, it is said, Carter's increasing awareness that when it comes to Mid-east policy domestic politics must play an important if not a determining role.

Mid-east expert Edward R. F. Sheehan, who authored the well-known book on Henry Kissinger's "shuttle diplomacy," recently stated: "There exists an almost

phantasmagoric contradiction between American theory and practice in the Arab-Israeli conflict."

Carter's "peace plan," Sheehan fears, may only be "theatre and we had best brace ourselves for a new disaster." Carter, Sheehan speculates, may be "in the process of demolishing his own policy," as he is "plagued by the pressures of domestic politics and the protestations of Israel's American constituency."

ALTHOUGH Carter last week

appeared to soften Vance's criticism of the Israeli government's legalisation of three West Bank settlements in heavily-populated Arab areas, Press reaction in the U.S. has been unusually tough-minded.

The *New York Times* balanced its views by asserting that "it may be that (Begin's) actions represent only a minimal and politically necessary concession to the militants on his right, 'legalising' some existing settlements to avoid creating new ones." "But," the *Times* added, "if he intends a more massive settlement of Jews in disputed territory, he may well make real negotiation or a test of Arab flexibility impossible."

The *Washington Post* felt the time for balance is at an end. The legalisation of settlements has "the aura of sticking a thumb in Jimmy Carter's eye." "It is reckless, provocative and indefensible," the *Post's* editors wrote. "It amounts to a frontal assault on the American effort to arrange a settlement ... and puts the whole credibility of the Administration's Mid-east diplomacy on the line," it added.

The editors went on to encour-

age Carter to "fight" on this issue with the Israelis so they would have no misunderstandings stemming from the cordiality of Begin's visit. "Good feeling of the superficial and misleading sort achieved by Mr. Begin here last week is not merely worthless. It becomes positively perilous if it encourages Israel to proceed in ways that could fatally foreclose all hope for a comprehensive Arab-Israeli settlement."

Home bombed

A LARGE, sophisticated bomb exploded in the early morning of July 26 at the home of Morris J. Amity, executive director of the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC), popularly referred to as the Israeli lobby or the Jewish lobby.

Amity, his wife and their three children were "very, very lucky" to be alive, according to a police spokesman.

The police have as yet made little progress in solving the bombing which is being blamed by many on radical Palestinians or their supporters.

The incident recalled the assassination of Col. Yosef Alon, an Israeli air and naval attaché, outside his home in July 1973. That bombing was never solved.



HAMILTON Jordan (arrowed), Assistant to President Carter, sizes up Menachem Begin at a Press Conference in Washington last month.