

# COMMENT

TALKS resume at Camp David today between Cyrus Vance, U.S. Secretary of State, Mustafa Khalil, Egyptian Prime Minister, to whom the portfolio of foreign affairs was recently added, and Moshe Dayan, the Israeli Foreign Minister.

The three men will consider new possibilities of overcoming the obstacles to the signing of the draft Egyptian-Israeli treaty.

It does not take a seer to predict that the talks will fail because of Israeli intransigence, lack of adaptability and lack of real understanding of the Egyptian situation.

Whereas Egypt appears to want a settlement, When Egypt appears to want a surrender to

Israel appears to want surrender. Let us begin with the settlement talks, as they started. The initiative came from President Sadat when he paid a surprise visit to Jerusalem in November 1977 and addressed the Israeli Knesset, stressing that Egypt wanted an overall peace which would mean an opportunity to improve both its and Israel's economies which were subordinated to arms-purchases and military preparations.

"A just, honourable peace for all parties concerned including a Palestine nationhood is what we should all aim at," Sadat said.

He said he was not making a surrender to Israel but asking for peace from a point of strength and self-confidence.

What Sadat wanted was an exact application of the provisions of the UN Security Council's resolutions 242 and 338 to which the superpowers and other members agreed. Talks were to be held in Geneva under the chairmanship of the U.S. and Russia. Sadat believed that the ball was in the American court and that if he undertook talks with Israel and with full American participation, a settlement could be achieved.

The U.S. was responsive to this new turn of policy, and the result was the Carter-Sadat-Begin summit talks at Camp David which culminated

in the signing of two instruments, the Camp David Accords.

To the Arab world the accords were unacceptable because they did not achieve full justice for the Palestinians or settle the status of Jerusalem.

Egypt, however, found them acceptable. The present problem is that Israel inserted a clause which gave the Israel treaty precedence over all previous Egyptian defence treaties with other Arab states.

This was asking the impossible because Egypt cannot totally leave the Arab fold nor can it repudiate its commitments to the Arab collec-

tive security pact. It is on this clause of the proposed treaty, that talks have collapsed and it is on this point that they will collapse again. Secondly, Israel refuses to fix a timetable for elections, and self-rule of the Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza although it agreed to this in the Camp David Accords.

With President Carter apparently lacking the will to face up to Menachem Begin — at least until after the next elections in America — stalemate is the best even the most fervent supporters of this always-suspect settlement can look forward to. As things stand, that might be no bad thing.

## WASHINGTON: American muscle withers in the face of Israeli stubbornness

U.S. Defence Secretary Harold Brown's recent swing through the Mid-east came at a time of greatly heightened American anxiety about both the political and the military situation in the region.

Iran's withdrawal from the American strategic picture has occasioned serious reappraisals in Washington about the international balance of power and long-term American interests throughout the Mid-east. Brown's trip was just the beginning in a concerted American attempt to reassure friends and caution foes in that part of the world.

Beyond Iran, a new success over Turkey can be detected in Washington. "Fear of what is happening in Turkey is shaking many people in the government," Ambassador L. Dean Brown, President of Washington's Mid-east Institute, indicated in a recent interview.

Of course the Arab-Israeli problem continues to worry the American government as well. There is much awareness in the State Department of the substantial risks involved in the separate peace strategy, developed on at the White House less than a year ago and consummated at Camp David last September.

Those Camp David framework agreements now appear to be highly questionable, even though new talks are scheduled to begin soon between Egyptian Prime Minister Moustapha Khalil and Israeli Foreign Minister Moshe Dayan.

Even if there should be further progress in Israeli-Egyptian bilateral relations, there is widespread anxiety among Mid-east experts in the U.S. that the Arab-Israeli conflict will continue to threaten the U.S. unless Mid-east strategy until a much more comprehensive settlement can be arranged.

Nevertheless the Carter administration continues to gamble heavily all on the Camp David approach, largely because doing this makes sense. It is the only option there has been any serious thought being given to. However, it is likely to be supported by Congress, the press and public opinion.

And with Carter's credibility so heavily invested in the Camp David process, no one in the President's Mid-east team seems willing to con-

# When Carter's grand design began to cave in ... the first time he backed down to Begin



impotent to push Israel beyond marginal shifts in treaty language. Carter has in desperation let down his friends in Jordan and Saudi Arabia. Unable to admit the failure of most of his grand design for an Arab-Israeli peace, Carter is, apparently, still pursuing his original policies with far-off visions while having largely yielded in short-term practice to the Israeli goal of putting off the real issues while breaking Egypt off from the dispute.

Strong pressures can still be expected in a last ditch effort to force both Jordan and Saudi Arabia into the new mystical "process" — the political little Carter has to show for his commendable efforts.

American officials continue to delude themselves into thinking the process to be actual. But when pressed to justify their hopes they do so largely negatively by asking, "Well, what else can we do?"

Of course, having allowed the situation to deteriorate to this point they may be right that there is not much else to do now. But a sharp, determined, self-confident Mid-east team capable of playing the political and public opinion game in the same league with Israel would never have let itself be cornered like this.

The overall lack of confidence and "spinelessness" (to use a term increasingly muttered around Washington these days) of the Carter administration in dealing with Israel has become the reverse side of the coin from the toughness now exhibited toward Khashid and Amman over support for Camp David.

But it seems a rather hollow toughness, and it becomes rather doubtful that Carter would actually take steps to permanently damage U.S. relations with U.S. Saudi relations no matter how much Israel encourages and urges the Arab-Israeli fight.

Part of the non-acceptable logic of Camp David is that, for heavy-handedness with the moderate Arab.

But since the White House has little if anything to offer at this point, few really expect this tactic to succeed and the moderate Arab leaders to wage Carter now from the Jewish-Israeli

ments lending hope to any possibility the Israelis were serious about the Palestinian autonomy idea — disappeared the field.

It all gives an illusion of something going on and of movement. Brown added, "but what everybody is really waiting for is the second half to begin. Unfortunately this may not be possible until 1981 when the White House may again with Carter or without him, have enough breathing room to attempt some radical proposals to win the Arab-Israeli settlement process again."

Though Ambassador Brown continues with the view that little may happen until 1981 because of Carter's extremely weak political position, the delay could be disastrous for the

When the newly re-elected President will have the strength and the political sophistication to fulfill the promises he continues to make to the Arabs about a Brookings Report type comprehensive settlement of the entire Arab-Israeli problem.

The acceptable reality is that since coming to office Carter has been badly and repeatedly duped in his dealings with Israel. Begin, during his last term as President, had wanted to see Washington's support for the Camp David process.

Another example of Carter ineptitude came in December when the President attempted to portray Israel as responsible for allowing the

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both in and out of government, that the Arab-Israeli conflict will continue to threaten the U.S.'s entire Middle East strategy until a much more comprehensive settlement can be arranged.

Nevertheless, the Carter administration continues to gamble nearly all its eggs on the Camp David approach, largely because of its inability to do anything else.

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And with Carter's credibility so heavily invested in the Camp David "process," no one on the President's staff seems willing to suggest that the President with the growing doubts that exist throughout the Department of State and the academic community over the wisdom of adhering to the separate peace approach.

**Leaks**

Faced with cautious expressions of these doubts, one and then to four, the White House has taken a major step in attempting to close ranks in early February in what were intended to be strictly secret meetings with top State Department and National Security Council officials, the President demanded that even off-the-record conversations with journalists cease.

These meetings symbolized an admission by Carter that he had not even been successful in convincing his own top people about his policies. Furthermore, the leaking of the meeting and of the substance of what the President had to say was clear proof that the President does not have the complete allegiance of some of the top

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Another example of Carter's impetuosity came in December, when the President attempted to put in Israel a responsible for allowing the December 13th signing deadline to pass. No matter how objectively correct Carter was, he was not taking into account the public opinion of the situation with the Arab-Israeli conflict.

The result was an emotional, impetuous Carter's impetuosity, which might have been avoided if Carter had taken the time to consult with his advisors.

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And even if Carter became determined to attempt to push Israel into some kind of measure which might result in a larger measure of Arab self-assurance, based on firm American assurances of both the direction and the outcome of negotiations to negotiate a gradual overall peace process, Carter's track record in dealing with Israel and with American leaders, so miserable that he lacks credibility even with many government officials working on the Middle East problem.

Recently, for instance, Assistant Secretary of State Harold Saunders spoke in New York before the Council on Foreign Relations and gave a perceptive and all the right things, but he didn't seem to really believe his own analysis of U.S. Middle East policy.

Furthermore, SAULT has become the White House's primary source of information on the Arab-Israeli conflict, and his credibility has been seriously questioned by the press and the public.

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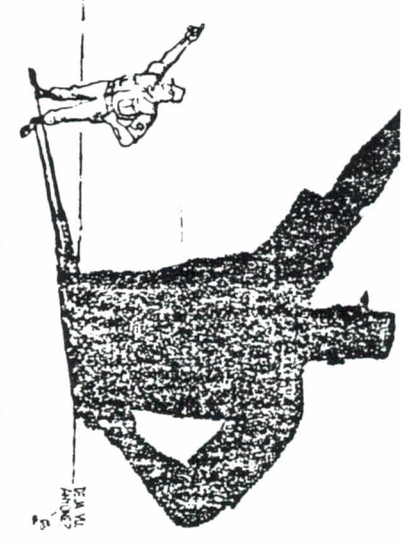
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Systematic torture? Naturally, there's not a word of truth in it!



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