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THE MIDDLE EAST

an £ publication

FROM MOGULS TO MULLAHS

PLUS
SPECIAL REPORT:
Palestine's men
speak out



Iran's
new face



COVER STORY: Pulse-takers of power-struggles the world over are waiting with bated breath for the Iranian situation to crystallize. *The Middle East* assesses what the emerging forces will mean to distant allies and close neighbours, and whether Islam is the right answer at the present time. Page 25

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As the Arab world's kaleidoscope settled

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FORUM



Ambassador Dean Brown has had a long career in Middle

East affairs so he is in a position to pick holes in Jimmy Carter's policies in the region. Brown tells *Mark Bruzonsky* just where he thinks the US President has gone wrong. Page 81

BUSINESS



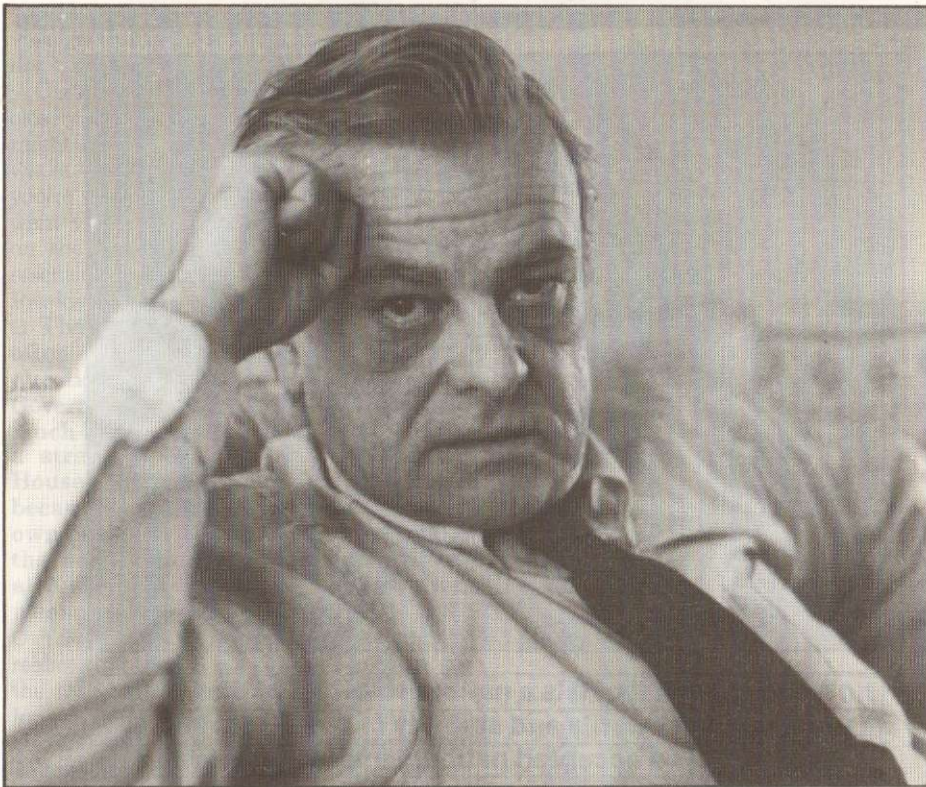
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FORUM

AMBASSADOR DEAN BROWN



"It's as if the last man in the room is the one that has the most influence" on US President Carter, laments the President of Washington's Middle East Institute, Ambassador L. Dean Brown.

In a foreign service career spanning 30 years, Ambassador Brown has observed and participated in American foreign policy throughout the zigs and zags of the Arab-Israeli dispute. He arrived in Jordan as Ambassador just before the 1970 civil war and served throughout the October War. Then he returned to Washington as Deputy Under Secretary of State for Management before retiring in 1975 to head the Middle East Institute. During the past few years Brown has continued to serve the US Government in a variety of capacities. Under President Ford he was director of the interagency task force for Indochina and later special presidential envoy to Lebanon.

In this wide-ranging interview with *Mark Bruzonsky*, Brown predicts that the Saudis will reassess their whole relationship with the US.

Carter's M.E. policy: trial and error

Bruzonsky: Two years ago Jimmy Carter came to the Presidency, apparently with the right instincts about the Arab-Israeli quagmire. But now we have at best a separate peace with little hope for more. How does one explain what's happened to the Carter Presidency?

Brown: I think Carter was full of surprises to us. I think we should step back a little further and take a look at the campaign.

In the campaign Carter repeated a lot of the slogans and rhetoric of Democratic candidates running for President over the years. You remember him proclaiming that if elected he would move the embassy to Jerusalem immediately and a whole series of things like that which led everybody acquainted with the Middle East to sort of

throw up their hands and say, "Oh my God, we have to go through this whole educational process all over again".

And then somehow during his first few months in office a series of rather odd speeches came out where the code words were used in slightly different ways than they had been used in the past.

He'd talk one day about secure boundaries and everybody would say, "Oh my God, we've been trapped in something or another", but the way he'd say it would be slightly different than said before. And then he finally got to talking about the Palestinians - "homeland", "entity", "rights", and then in the Joint Statement with the Soviet Union, "legitimate rights".

□ Which went beyond the former American position of "Palestinian in-

terests" to a homeland.

○ It went to the point where people could say he stands for the creation of a Palestinian state on the West Bank and Gaza. That was that spring; then there were some serious, curious things that happened. When the Arabs all came here - Fahd, Hussain, Sadat - all of them went away convinced that Carter was really going to cope with the entire Middle East problem, including the question of a Palestinian state.

But something happened over the summer. Because you got one flair of this attempt to cope, the Soviet-American communique, but other than that, nothing.

Somehow over the summer people began to have a different analysis of Carter. And I still don't know what happened to Carter's plans.

That's the period when the dialogue with the PLO that was just beginning, ended.

○ Everything, of course, was affected by the Begin election and visit. In other words I think maybe Carter's ideas of what he would be able to do with the Israelis were put off the track.

Don't you think the Joint Statement symbolises where Carter finally learned that the power of the Presidency was extremely limited? Wasn't that the break point?

○ I'm not sure. I suspect the break point came somewhere in the summer before that.

Brzezinski was still trying?

○ Yes, Brzezinski probably thought: well, let's try it this way to see if we can shake things a little bit loose since things have been going to pieces. Remember before that you were essentially moving rapidly towards Geneva. What kind of Geneva? A Geneva without a plan or agenda, where the United States would be just one of the public participants but not a leader. Carter seemed to believe that if you can only get people in a room together somehow or other there will have to be progress cause that's the way human beings behave.

Are you suggesting that Carter has been a trial and error President engaged in on-the-job training when it comes to the Middle East?

○ I think so, very much so... I always thought he thought that sweet reason would be accepted by other people.

You're smiling as you say this. He is the President of the United States.

○ He is, that's right. And he had and I think he still has traces of the idea that somehow since he's a good man, an honest man, people should understand. A lot of other people think like that that are leaders, as we know.

You might say that part of the problem was the fact there was a deliberate policy in the beginning to understaff the National Security Council. That is to say they didn't want to replicate Henry Kissinger. I think you've noticed they've sort of added a couple of people since.

Who does Carter have around him whom he could really go to when the going gets rough and talk about the problems the United States has with the Arab-Israeli conflict?

○ He doesn't have anyone. One of the things that has always struck me about the President, and I think this is reflected in some of the odd statements we've seen coming out of the President at different times, it's sort of as if the last man in the room is the one that has the most influence. And usually the last man in the room is a Jody Powell or a Hamilton Jordan or somebody like that who is talking to him about domestic things - how to make it look good domestically, what will sell, as they

used to say in Nixon's days, in Peoria.

And this is not the way to deal with foreign policy issues, as we know. By implication, Carter believes that all people in the intimate staff have equal access and equal right to discuss all subjects, and by implication, equal expertise. Which isn't the case.

That's where I think he's lost out and that's why we get some of these very odd statements where he really went bad historically because somebody threw a wrong fact.

Right after Camp David you in-

possibility of even doing that type of consultation they need with their people if they're going to make a major policy statement that is in complete variance with what they've been saying before.

I think that there was a window or a door that was slightly open. I still think it's true that the Arab leaders didn't have to be negative.

But didn't Carter lose his credibility shortly after Camp David when he got into this debate with Begin about the settlement moratorium?

○ Well, this is true...



"We may think that it is a national interest of the US to preserve the security and stability of Israel. But I don't know if it is an accepted national interest of Israel to enhance the security and well-being of the US"

dedicated you thought the Saudis and King Hussain would be restrained, would ask for time but would not be overtly negative. Why were you wrong?

○ I'd hoped they'd be more positive. I wanted them to be positive. And I suppose that probably affected that judgement. Looking back we can see that what we didn't do is give them the time they needed to work out the type of consensus they need when they're making major policy decisions.

Did the US actually give them sufficient policy?

○ No, we didn't. But the main point is we didn't give them time. What we did was confront them with the Vance visit too quickly. And the Vance visit required them to say something because Vance was saying things in the plane before he landed - such as "The King owes us this one". And then this confronted both Kings with the im-

○ And within a few days the Prime Minister of Israel effectively called the President of the United States a liar, and the President of the United States gave in and no letter exchange ever took place about the settlements?

○ And that's when the door closed in a sense, because that confronted the Arabs and the Palestinians with an impossible situation. What they were doing is, I think, hoping against hope that somehow the relationship of Sadat with Carter would reopen that window, that Carter would lay it out on the line.

Do you think Carter should have stood up to the Israelis then?

○ Yes.

And that would have made a difference?

○ I think it could have made a difference.

Do you think there's any way, as the

Camp David thing has evolved, that the Jordanians can reverse their attitude and participate in this process?

○ No, no. There's nothing for them. Not without something new. I mean if we're just relying on Camp David they're not going to take part.

□ **Well, there's not much chance, in a pre-election period, that the Israelis are going to give more to Carter now than they've given him so far, is there?**

○ I doubt it very much. Unless Carter wants to lay it all on the line, for the first time, clearly and explicitly to the American people what he considers the problem and what he thinks the solution should be. And I don't know if he's going to do this.

Certain people who are involved and closely wrapped up in the Middle East might suggest this. Others who look at the whole mass of problems tell him, "Since you're not going to get too far with it, if you want your SALT you may have to give up on the Middle East". This is one of the essential types of compromises that Presidents make.

□ **That raises a problem which is not often discussed in the press - the question of whether the American Government is effectively penetrated so much by the Israelis that evolving such a strategy on the part of the White House becomes hampered simply because you can't even count on your own people in the bureaucracies to keep the secret, that the Israelis find out about it fast enough to take counter measures.**

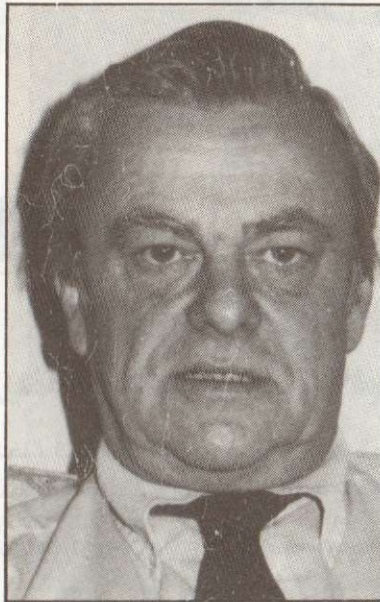
○ Yes, there is a problem here. The Israelis realise that the US is a key issue to them, so the task of the Israeli foreign service is to know as intimately as possible what the currents of thinking are in the US, and the Israelis are very good at anticipating where America is going and when it is necessary to get an ambassador in or have a telephone call made. This isn't just on foreign affairs but on economic matters as well. They are pretty tough and dedicated in preserving their national interest.

There's a confusion in people's minds about national interest and I think the President suffers from this. I think he suffered from it in dealing with both Sadat and Begin. He assumes that what he considers the global interests of the world, which are essentially those that are also the interests of the US, are shared by all other people.

But I don't think that's necessarily so. We may think for instance that it is a national interest of the US to preserve the security and stability of the State of Israel. But I don't know if it is an accepted national interest of Israel to enhance the security and well-being of the US. Certainly it is not if that adversely affects, in any way, the security and prosperity and well-being of the State of Israel.

□ **You suggested it was difficult to see how the Camp David agreement necessarily furthered American national interests. I would assume that as Camp David unravels you would have an even more gloomy assessment.**

○ Very much so. The attitude taken by Senator Church is a perfect example of what happens as all this starts to unravel. The fault somehow becomes that of the Saudis and we should take their airplanes away from them. A very interesting concept, a naked power play that Senator Church would oppose for any other part of the world.



"Carter believes that all people in the intimate staff have . . . equal expertise. Which isn't the case."

□ **Is it possible that with people like Senator Church beginning to try to drive a wedge between the US and Saudi Arabia, the Saudis are going to get upset and back off from the US?**

○ Yes, I think it is. I think the Saudis will be reassessing their whole relationship with the United States, and I think they're doing it right now.

I think now with the collapse of Iran, with the likely dissolution of the whole Camp David process, and their interests in Jerusalem and in somehow taking care of the Palestinian problem, they seem to be getting uneasy about whether this is the US they had thought it was.

It's a good question to ask because we're not the self-confident nation, the almost aggressive nation in trying to reform and change the world that we were in the decades right after World War II.

□ **When it comes to Egypt, is the US creating a situation where a year or two from now its promises aren't going to be delivered either economically or politically, and Sadat is going to be way out in a corner?**

○ I'm not sure that we can or will give Sadat all he'll probably need. I remember briefing congressional staff aides before they made a trip to the Middle East, who brought up this point - "Why can't we just pick up the bill and take care of Sadat". And I said "Just pass authorisation for \$25 billion for five years." They said, "That's ridiculous", and I said, "That's the point".

If you're going to cut Sadat off from other sources of aid, you're going to have to provide this kind of money on a long term basis. And if he signs this agreement now with nothing further on the second framework, even the Saudis will carry out what was agreed in Baghdad, cutting off all economic assistance to Egypt.

And I don't think we'll match it. I don't think we can do it any more. I think that the President of the US simply could not sell this to Congress at this time, even if it made sense.

□ **The pressure on Hussain, I understand, has been quite extreme. I've heard conversations where the King is reported to have told the Americans he'd rather give up his throne and die than be the Arab leader that gave up Jerusalem.**

○ I think that's exactly right. King Hussain to this day resents Camp David. The fact that Jordan was mentioned without a telephone call or a consultation with him of any kind.

□ **What are the Americans going to say to him now? If Vance is ordered by the President to try to save Camp David he's got to come up with something.**

○ That's right, and what can he do? Is he going to threaten? If he wants to threaten the King, I think the King will only respond, "I cannot accept these threats".

□ **It's a pretty hollow bluff on the American part isn't it?**

○ Well, I think it's a hollow bluff now because whereas at one time we were the major provider of aid to Jordan, we're no longer there, we're just one of the providers. And actually the major amounts of money and certainly the freer kind of money is coming from the Arab states. And King Hussain is now in the process of reinvolving himself in the Arab nation.

□ **Camp David looks like the place where the US, in order to put off troubles with the Israelis, risked its relations with the moderate Arabs and brought about an alliance between Syria and Iraq.**

○ Involving, by the way, Jordan, because Jordan has very definite links with Syria.

□ **Plus a rapprochement between the**

PLO and Jordan and the alienation, at least to some extent, of Jordan and Saudi Arabia. The US has risked everything that it has worked for for the last couple of decades in the Middle East for the sake of not pushing the Israelis in a way which broad segments of the US intellectual community, ever since the Brookings Report, have said should be done.

○ Exactly. And when we talk about the alienation of Jordan and Saudi Arabia, what we've done is silence their voices within the Arab circles speaking the moderate, the pro-American course of action. When they say something it seems to be a fainter echo of what's being said by the tougher ones, the Iraqis, the Algerians, the Syrians. So we can even say the US has recreated the left in Lebanon. You have noticed the Shiites and the Palestinians are now back together after having been sharply divided for some time.

□ **Three or four months ago, President Carter asked George Ball to draw up a long term view of what American policy should be toward the Gulf. Supposing he turned to you, what would you tell him?**

○ I'd tell him to get George Ball's report out and read it again, whatever waste basket it's in. I'd say read that again and let me know what you think about it, and if you and Brzezinski still think as you thought about it at the time, then no thanks, I don't want the job.

□ **How would you differ from the Brookings Report? Or would you basically tell Carter that's still the framework America should be operating on?**

○ I think I'd still do that. I think I would spell out a little bit more than the Brookings Report did about interim steps to be taken. The more I think about it, the less I want to see a quick transition, a quick and dirty transition, to a Palestinian state on the West Bank and Gaza. I want a series of time gaps, but not ones which allow the Israelis on one side or the PLO or the Iraqis to say "Halt". I want some sort of involvement perhaps of the Security Council or some kind of international group.

□ **You want an image of where it's going but then to do it in a step-by-step way.**

○ In a step-by-step way with a certain checking at each step but no great veto powers built in to stop it from moving to the next step.

□ **What would you tell the President about the Palestinian problem and about the Americans dealing with the PLO?**

○ I would say that what we should basically be doing is going to the Palestinians and saying, "We are willing to deal with Palestinians. Would you create a mechanism that has more representivity

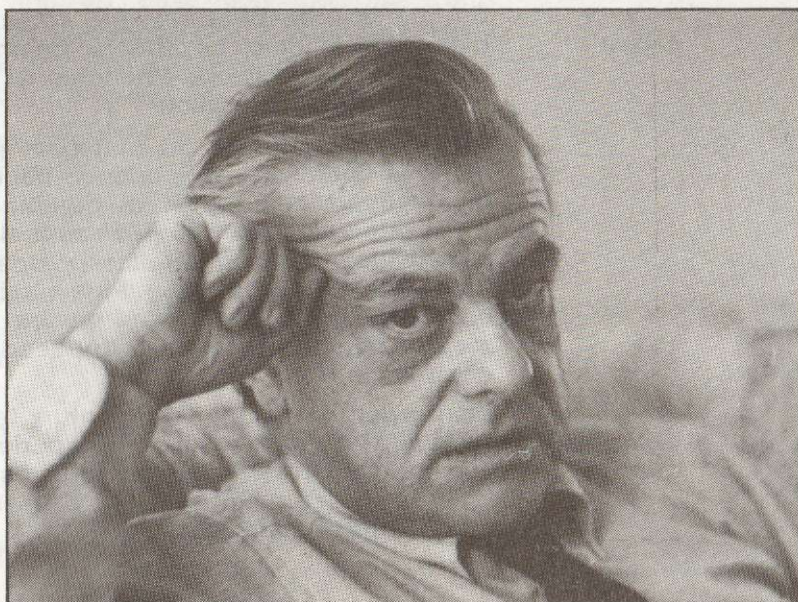
than the PLO"?

□ **Carter thought at Camp David that he could get around dealing with the PLO.**

○ Well, one of the great problems of Camp David's West Bank framework is that it talks about the inhabitants in the area. In other words, it says that what we're talking about is those Palestinians who are presently living in the West Bank, we're not talking about the million in Jordan, the 400,000 in Lebanon, all these people who have to be involved sometime in the Palestinian state. One reason I want a time mechanism is that

recommend that the Palestinians create a more representative body. In reality the PLO is clearly representative.

○ For public relations reasons. We are stuck ourselves. Even the American people, sympathetic as they are in general towards the Palestinians as people, have no patience with the PLO. The PLO by being both a political and military and then guerrilla organisation in the minds of the American people has identified itself more with the latter two things and more particularly with the third. And I'd like to see the PNC take



"I'd like to see the PNC take some of these Palestinians who exist throughout the Arab world, including some here in the US, and get them into an organisation which can think more along political terms and present a different image."

I want the people in the West Bank and Gaza to be voting eventually. But I first want time for them to decide who's going to be living in the West Bank and Gaza. I don't think you can run a vote where Palestinians who are living anywhere can vote.

□ **But what about those in southern Lebanon or Syria?**

○ Well, they may make the decision to go back.

□ **Before the vote?**

○ Before the vote. In other words there has to be a time period where people can decide where they're going to live and people can't make that decision overnight. If the gates were open to Palestine, huge mobs of people would be in there and then huge mobs of people would be leaving fairly soon.

□ **Let's go back to that Palestinian question. Why is it that you would**

some of these Palestinians who exist throughout the Arab world, including some here in the United States, and get them into an organisation which can think more along political terms, strategic terms, and present a different image.

□ **It's March 1979. Carter has only a few more months before he's really running almost full-time for President again. So in that context doesn't the Middle East situation really get put on hold until 1981?**

○ If so, it could be disastrous. I don't think it can hold for ever. Now what does that mean? I don't think it means wars or anything like that; I think the possibility of war can never be dismissed, but in the foreseeable future it would be accidental, more than anything else. Unless it becomes pre-emptive. □