

FALLOUT FROM THE SADAT VISIT

by Howard Adelman

The visit affected substantive issues, the balance of alliances, and above all, the images of the parties. An analysis of each of these suggests why Egypt is winning the "War of Images."

"Fallout" has at least three connotations. There is a neutral one suggesting the events that occur as a result of an action. There is a negative one referring to the quality of specific after-effects such as a fallout among friends resulting in quarreling. The third connotation is sinister and probably the dominant one in this post-Hiroshima age. It suggests an unseen lurking danger with all kinds of unknown hideous consequences. These connotations roughly correlate with the three topics under which one can analyze the results of the Sadat visit: issues, alliances and images.

ISSUES

PEACE. The Sadat visit by and large resolved one of the major problems in the dispute between Israel and her Arab neighbours — the problem of the conception of peace. Israel had insisted that peace must mean full peace and the development of all normal diplomatic, economic, trade, and tourist relations between neighbouring countries. Agreements had to result not only in the cessa-

tion of hostilities and a new non-belligerent status quo, but in positive peaceful contacts at all levels of society to blow away the sand curtain that separates Israel from the rest of the Middle East.

Sadat's visit in part accomplished that altered conception. For Egypt declared its readiness for a full peace as Israel depicts it, in contrast to its former stand that real peace would take a long time to develop and the most that could be accomplished in the interval was a state of non-belligerency. Also a majority of Jewish Israelis now believe that Egypt is sincerely interested in peace. This changed attitude was a direct result of Sadat's visit. And according to Professor Guttman's Continuing Survey of Israeli public opinion, that changed attitude has remained in spite of the multitudes of 'downs' in the peace making process since the Sadat visit.

The change in the issue of the nature of peace demonstrated in the most dramatic way by Sadat's visit, and also Israeli belief in the sincerity and depth of that change, is, however only a partial change. It is partial because a major belligerent is unaffected by it. Syria has not changed its definition of peace. Further, Israelis are as convinced as ever that Syria is not interested in peace and they will have to fight another war in the next five years.

Sadat came to Jerusalem to resolve that large part of the problem which he declared to be psychological. The very fact of his coming, irrespective of what was said, dealt with only part of the problem, the definition of peace and left the substantive issues of territories, self-determination for the Palestinians and

self-defence capabilities for the Israelis unresolved.

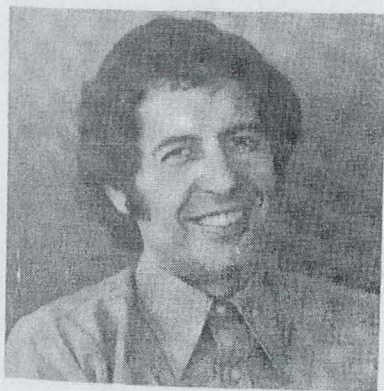
If Sadat's visit solved part of one of the issues, what did it do to the others? Let us begin with the two issues that primarily concern both sides in turn, self-determination for the Palestinians and self-defence for the Israelis, and then deal with the third that overlaps all others, the problem of territories.

PALESTINIAN SELF-DETERMINATION Self-determination for which Palestinians, and within what limits will they be allowed to exercise their self-determination?

The Israelis had always insisted that the PLO did not and would not be allowed to represent the Palestinians. Even before Sadat left for his historic visit to Jerusalem, the Egyptians, in their discussions of the procedural questions about Geneva, had already given up their insistence that the PLO represent the Palestinians. However, one day after we read reports that Sadat had backed down on a direct role for the PLO at Geneva, Hodding Carter III, the U.S. State Department spokesman, insisted to reporters that the U.S. — Israel working paper negotiated with Dayan did not deny a PLO presence in Geneva. Since this followed earlier leaks of the American demand for a PLO presence, Israelis were convinced that they were on a collision course with the U.S. over the role of the PLO.

One of the clear effects, whether indirect or direct, of the Sadat visit to Jerusalem has been President Carter's more or less explicit write-off of a role for the PLO. The Israelis had won on this issue not only with Egypt but, more importantly with the U.S., and Sadat appeared to deserve the credit for bringing the U.S. and Israel together on this issue, even though it remained unresolved for other crucial interested parties — Syria, the Soviet Union, and of course, the PLO.

Which Palestinians are to be represented? First of all, they are Palestinian Arabs and not Palestinian Jews. Secondly, they are no longer defined as Palestinian refugees, for some Arab leaders have come to realize that would raise the question of representation for Jewish refu-



Howard Adelman, Professor of Philosophy at Atkinson College, York University, is visiting Professor at the Hebrew University in 1977-78.

gees from Arab lands who did not go to Israel and whom Israel does not represent. For that reason and others, such as the PLO domination of refugee camps in Lebanon, there has been a convergence of views on this issue as well between the U.S., Israel and Egypt.

The Palestinians to be represented will be residents of the Gaza strip and the West Bank. Although this represented a shift from Israel's former position that its dispute was with Arab states and not the Palestinian Arabs in particular, this shift had been made prior to Sadat's visit and was specifically enunciated in the Israel-U.S. working paper on Geneva. The result of the Sadat visit was to confirm the U.S. in this position as well.

The dispute which has come into clearer focus subsequent to the Sadat visit has been the terms under which Palestinian Arabs in the West Bank and Gaza will be allowed to exercise their political rights. The most important aspect of this is whether they will be permitted to decide to have their own state. The Israelis have consistently and adamantly opposed this. On this issue the Americans seem to have explicitly lined up with Israel. Egypt had insisted that Palestinians self-determination included the right to their own state, though they expressed a preference for a linkage of that state with Jordan. Though it is not clear, following the Carter-Sadat talks in America in February, one has the impression that agreement could be reached on a West Bank and Gaza entity strongly linked to Jordan.

Where Sadat has not budged and where the U.S. seems to have consistently backed him is on the issue of Palestinian Arab rights to determine who can and who cannot settle in the West Bank. On this issue, both the governing coalition and the opposition in Israel are opposed to handing over unrestricted rights, while most of the coalition are opposed to any legal restriction of Jewish settlement in any part of the West Bank. The Labour opposition and part of the coalition seem to be concerned only with preventing restrictions related to locations considered necessary for Israeli self-defence. The Israelis are split over

whether it is a practical issue or an issue of principle.

Finally, it is not clear where Sadat stands on the Palestinian right to determine their own defence needs. He seems willing to delegate that right to Jordan and adamantly opposed to Israel continuing to be responsible for the security of the West Bank and Gaza. On this issue the U.S. seems to be backing Israel and there is no clear indication that Egypt and Israel are closer on this issue than they were prior to Sadat's visit.

ISRAEL'S SELF-DEFENCE Sadat stated categorically in his Jerusalem address that he understood Israel's need for security and he was willing to give whatever guarantees seemed necessary as long as there was a total Israeli withdrawal of its military forces from Arab territory.

Peres, in response to Sadat's speech in the Knesset, noted that security arrangements which did not allow for self-defence would be inadequate. Dayan, in a subsequent Israeli television interview, succinctly summarized the differences. "When Sadat says he recognizes Israel's need for security, he immediately adds a definition of security... security (to Sadat) does not mean defensible borders, or territories, or straits, but arrangements, demilitarization, treaties, warning stations and guarantees."

The Israelis do not want to place ultimate reliance on a U.N. or a U.S. presence to act as a *cordon sanitaire* between Gaza and Egypt. This is why Israel wants to retain a military and civilian presence in the Rafiah approaches. This is why the issue over Yamit became so prominent prior to the breakdown in the political talks in Jerusalem. The Israelis are unwilling to give up their airfields in the Sinai adjacent to Eilat and Yamit, at least until all Arab countries have completed a full peace with Israel and this peace has had a chance to prove itself.

Although the United States seems to be sympathetic to Israel on this issue, there is certainly no indication that there has been a convergence between Israel and Egypt, particularly when Muhamed Ibrahim Kamel, the Egyptian Foreign Minister makes a statement insisting on

total Israeli withdrawal from all Arab territory including a specific reference to the Golan heights, which, in the hands of an intractable enemy would threaten the whole of the Huleh valley in the north of Israel. For Israelis, security is a matter of self-defence and not of guarantees.

TERRITORIES. It is clear that the problem of the territories involves not only issues of self-determination and self-defence, but is complicated by notions that seem extraneous to most outsiders and many insiders. These include emotional attachments to sites for religious, historical or other reasons. Thus Yamit, initially established for defence purposes to put an Israeli presence between Gaza and territory that would be returned to Egypt, assumes an internal Israeli political importance when the present inhabitants have established roots, businesses, agriculture and a viable community. There is no problem of self-determination here, except possibly, for the very recent Israeli settlers. The issue of self-defence for some Israelis is now overshadowed by the commitment by the previous government, now leading the opposition, and the existing government to those settlers.

At the other end of the spectrum is the problem of East Jerusalem, including the Old City. Should the Arab inhabitants of East Jerusalem be allowed to determine that this part of the city be severed from the Jewish part? Should the majority of the inhabitants of the old city determine its fate and hence the fate of the Jewish quarter itself? Since the middle of the nineteenth century when Jerusalem was only the old city with a population of 5,000, the majority of the inhabitants of the whole city has always been Jewish. In which segment of territory — a part of a whole city, a whole city, or a whole region — should self-determination be implemented?

Israelis are overwhelmingly committed to the retention of Jerusalem and its immediate surroundings. On the occasion of Sadat's visit, King Khaled of Saudi Arabia, Sadat's financial backer, urged Arabs to unite to liberate Jerusalem and the El Aqsa mosque from Israeli occupation. Sadat still interprets U.N. resolutions 242 and 338 as calling for the

return of all Arab territory captured in the 1967 War. The return of every inch of the Sinai, including Yamit, has "holy" overtones because it reinforces the principle of the return of all territories irrespective of those parts of the resolutions that call for secure borders.

SUMMARY. On substantial matters, there has been no apparent change on the issue of territories separating the disputants. There has been no apparent shift in Israeli insistence on self-defence or Egyptian failure to recognize that the issue for Israel is one of self-defence. There has been a shift by Egypt on who should represent the Palestinians and by Israel in recognizing that Palestinians should participate in deciding their own future. Although the Egyptians have shifted somewhat towards the Israeli position in discarding some issues on what the Palestinians should decide for themselves, there remain large and significant gaps between the Egyptian and Israeli positions as publicly presented.

ALLIANCES

The biggest fallout in the aftermath of the Sadat visit has been the fallout among the Arab states and the shift in positions of each of them. The PLO has clearly joined the rejectionist camp, although the opposition to Israel and Egypt has not healed the breach between Iraq and Syria. What is more interesting is that King Hussein and Egypt have shifted roles. Jordan was previously viewed as the most moderate of the confrontation states. Now, in an excerpt from an interview with Hussein on Jordanian news, Hussein has declared U.N. resolution 242 to be dead, insisted on Israeli withdrawal from all of the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and demanded full self determination for the Palestinian Arabs. This was but a culmination of "hard" speeches by Hussein since the new year.

But the continuing disarray in the Arab camp is balanced by the closer proximity of the U.S. and Egyptian positions, and also the new fissures appearing in U.S.-Israel relations. Previously, the dispute focussed on a role for the PLO. Israel won that controversy, possibly thanks to Sadat. But the U.S. seems to be much more aligned with Egypt than

with Israel in its view of the quantity of territory Israel must relinquish presumably on the old dictum of a little territory for a little peace, a lot of territory for a lot of peace. This of course is why there has been so much controversy over the settlements of late.

IMAGES

The Sadat visit was one of the media events of the century. It has been followed by a media war. It is a war that Egypt is clearly winning. It is signified by the change in attitudes of Israelis to the conception of Egyptian intentions. More importantly, where previously 8 or 9 out of 10 Americans favoured the Israeli positions in any Israeli-Arab dispute, following the breakdown in the political committee in Jerusalem in January, Americans were found in a survey to be equally split in assigning blame to the Egyptians and Israelis.

It is not just a product of the lack of quantity and quality in Israeli public relations efforts in the U.S., however badly these may need to be improved. Nor is it even a matter of American State Department bias which is being used to manipulate public opinion in Egypt's favour. Walter Laqueur had predicted long before Sadat's visit that there would be increasing subtle U.S. pressure on Israel and an effort to depict Israel as the unreasonable and intractable party to the conflict in contrast with the increased flexibility in the Arab camp.

The shift in Israel's image in the media war has been a product of three factors: the actual quantitative shift in positions of the disputants, the issues over which those shifts have taken or not taken place, and the nature of the medium through which the war is being waged.

In the recital of substantive issues it should be clear that however little shift there has been in the numerous areas of controversy, Egypt has made more shifts in its position. Whether or not it was incumbent on Egypt to shift further is beside the point when a central issue in the image war is who is being the most flexible.

One might feel it is not much of a shift in position or, at least, if it is, it is an unfair comparison. If one party to a conflict intent on killing an-

other party says, "See, I've laid down my knife. I no longer want to kill you so you don't need your knife anymore", it may be unfair to compare the change of position of the person who is intent on killing and the person intent on defending himself. But it is perceived as a significant shift. What is more, a significant portion of American culture believes in sudden transformations and radical religious conversions. It is a significant shift in position which fits a dominant strain in the American imagination.

It is not only the quantity and character of the shifts in position that count, but the medium through which the shifts are being conveyed — television. Television is terrific at conveying emotional sincerity. And Sadat has conveyed the impression that he has been governed by deep emotional convictions. The Israeli leaders will take no emotional leaps of faith when it comes to risking survival. For them, each step and each concession must be calculated in terms of its risk to their self-defence capabilities, and calculation comes across on television as mere cleverness. Further, the television medium is not the best tool to convey analytic distinctions between security in general and security postulated on an ability to defend oneself.

Finally, television is great in following and building a single star. Sadat is the lone star in the Egyptian camp. Israel speaks with a number of voices. On the role of the settlements, internal ambivalence over their role — whether they exist for defence purposes or as gestures to assert an Israeli claim to Judea and Samaria — has been clearly communicated to the North American public.

So Israel comes across as a somewhat confused but clever and calculating nation in contrast to an emotionally sincere Sadat, whose contradictions then appear as flexibility since the criteria on which media awards are being given do not include a "steadfast" factor in one's ability to defend oneself or to adhere to covenants and agreements, but one's degree of flexibility.

This loss in the media war, which Israel can do little to counter, is the deep, long range danger to Israel's position. It is the real fallout of Sadat's visit to Jerusalem.