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### **The meaning of peace**

OPERATION Peace for Galilee was launched within weeks of the final Israeli withdrawal from Sinai. Ever since, the heart and mind of Israel has inevitably been concentrated with passionate intensity on Lebanon.

Little attention has been paid to the state of relations with Egypt and the promised metamorphosis to be brought about by the peace treaty.

The “peace process” began in September 1977 when Prime Minister Menachem Begin conveyed to President Anwar Sadat the promise of Sinai in return for a peace treaty. No threat of war was then in the air. Egypt was in no state of preparedness for a shooting war. It was, indeed, engaged with its sister Arab states in the other war against Israel, of propaganda, in all its varieties, and on an international scale. It led the Arab states in the campaign for Israel’s withdrawal for “all the occupied territories.

Egypt’s political leaders, from the president downward, and its media, poured forth a constant stream of insult and denigration of Israel.

Nor was crude anti-Semitism lacking. It was not untoward then for Anis Mansour, editor of *October* magazine and Sadat’s confidant, to revive even the historic blood libel: that Jews used their victims’ blood in baking *matzot*.

More moderate leaders like Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs Butros Ghali merely laid it down that the Jewish people give up Zionism and Israeli sovereignty, and assimilate as a minority in the “Arab homeland.”

Egypt’s undertaking, at Rabat in 1974, to give aid and sustenance to the PLO in achieving its objectives underlined the common goal: the elimination of Israel as a state (leaving the fate of its people to the PLO).

All this, in brief, was before the peace “process.”

NOW, four years after the signing of the peace treaty, Egyptian spokesmen from every possible forum deliver virulent attacks on Israel. The war in Lebanon provided the occasion for particularly brutal flights of vilification.

At the UN, Ambassador Abdel Magid, in a vicious diatribe, repeatedly referred to Israeli Nazism. His speech only reflected the daily barrage of poison in the Cairo media. Perhaps the mildest of a large selection of curses and insults was that of Anis Mansour.

“What Hitler did in 12 years cannot be compared with what Israel has done in 12 days” (*October*, August 8, 1982).

Nor, day after day, was crude anti-Semitism lacking.

Lebanon, however, was only the incidental pretext, merely a chapter in a campaign which did not cease after the signing of the peace treaty. Quotations could fill a volume. Here are two examples from 1980: The Egyptian vice-premier described Israel as “a mini-state whose end is approaching” and the Jewish people as “treacherous and hypocritical.” In another case, a cartoon in *Al Gumhuriyeh* portrayed Begin receiving a medal from Hitler.

At this outrage, Begin protested to Sadat that this was a breach of the peace treaty. The only public reaction to his protest was a cover-cartoon in *Al Gumhuriyeh* depicting a snake intertwined in a *Magen David*.

Now – May 1983 – and the Egyptian media overflow with the already traditional cursing of Israel. There are new themes: the killing of Issam Sartawi and much more horrendously, the “mass poisoning of Arab girls on the West Bank,” with “genocide” and “Nazis” liberally sprinkled throughout.

The Peace Treaty, Annex III, Article 5(3) states simply: “The parties shall seek to foster mutual understanding and tolerance and will, accordingly, abstain from hostile propaganda against each other.”

AS FOR Egypt’s territorial demands beyond Sinai, these, after all, were dealt with in the second part of the Camp David Agreement – which, for all its dire implications for Israel, did at least postpone for several years the determination of the future of Judea and Samaria (and that by negotiation).

Egypt, with Sinai “in its pocket,” has behaved as though that agreement never existed. Egyptian spokesmen have simply reiterated (or, at the UN, supported) the unchanging Arab demand for Israel’s unconditional withdrawal, self-determination for the “Palestinian people,” the “right of return” (to Haifa, Jaffa et al.).

Now, in May 1983, Egypt in fact leads the Arab chorus in importuning the U.S. to press Israel into surrendering to its demands.

OPTIMISTS PINNED their hopes on “normalization,” which in time would change the climate of relations. Normalization was amply provided for in the peace treaty, and the principles laid down were, in fact, bolstered by a variety of agreements on special subjects.

Diplomatic personnel were exchanged – though the Egyptian ambassador has been absent since September 1982 as a “sanction” for the Lebanese operation; and communications function between the two countries.

Beyond that – not one single clause on Relations Between the Parties has been honoured by Egypt.

In trade, Egypt’s public sector – 80 per cent of its economy – is completely closed to Israel. Israel has even been barred from participation at international fairs in Cairo.

In the private sector, Egyptian businessmen are subjected to considerable bureaucratic discouragement. Business is painfully meager, and six months ago an Israeli shipping company which had been chosen by a New Zealand firm to deliver wool to Egypt was prevented from doing so in the name of the all-Arab boycott of Israel.

Israeli tourists, it is true, are allowed to enter Egypt (and to spend their dollars there), but prospective Egyptian tourists to Israel are actively discouraged and are subjected to such administrative difficulties that an Egyptian visitor to Israel is a rare phenomenon.

As for cultural relations, there were some promising signs in harmony with the many specific agreements signed – until Israel was safely out of Sinai.

Thereafter, the agreements – and the clauses in the peace treaty – became dead letters. In January 1983, even an Egyptian ping-pong team declined to meet Israel in a tournament in Brazil.

In short, beyond the barest minimum – and in direct violation of the treaty – there is simply no normalization of relations. Symbolically, maps of the Middle East published in Egypt contain no mention of Israel.

ALL THESE manifestations of the Egyptians' attitude towards Israel and to the peace treaty can be explained by Cairo's overriding desire to resume its place in the Arab family. But, it is said, this is less important than the fact that at least there is and will be peace – that is, no more war between Israel and Egypt. That (failing all else) is (we are told) the crucial change in the relations between the two countries achieved by the peace treaty.

It bears repeating that in September 1977, when the peace process began, there was also no war in progress or in sight.

The possibility of peace was ruled out by two factors: first, the doctrine shared by all the Arab states and codified in the Palestinian Covenant of the PLO, for the elimination of the Jewish state; and then, in keeping with the doctrine, the security pact among the Arab states, obliging any one of them to join in a war against Israel if called upon to do so.

The circumstance justifying such a call is described as “Zionist aggression” – but Israel's very existence is seriously defined by the Arabs as Zionist aggression.

Egypt then was obliged to join in armed combat with Israel if called upon to do so.

Significantly, Egypt had never fought Israel on its own.

Now, in statement after statement, in declaration after solemn declaration since the peace treaty was signed – and even during the negotiations that led up to the peace treaty – Egyptian salesmen have announced that the treaty with Israel does not supersede Egypt's obligations under the pacts with the other Arab states. Those obligations will be honoured in full.

It is to be hoped that there will be no more war with Egypt (or, indeed, with any other state). It is, however, not the peace treaty that will prevent war with Egypt.

As though to give notice of intent, Egypt has throughout (in spite of alleged soured relations with its sister states) maintained joint military training programmes with them. It has also not reduced its army but has strengthened it. It has been amassing new weapons, for land and air fighting, in large quantities; and in Sinai – according to latest information – it has committed grave violations of the peace treaty.

It has developed a military infrastructure far beyond the level permitted by the treaty. It has introduced military elements into the zone – designated as demilitarized – and regularly carries out prohibited reconnaissance activity. Israeli protests have been ignored.

Moreover, Egypt has allowed the PLO to operate offices in Cairo and El Arish. It is not insignificant that there is now a persistent stream of infiltrators carrying arms and explosives coming into Israel from Egypt.

THE ONLY material difference in relations effected by the peace treaty – and the only one that cannot be cancelled by a stroke of the pen – is that whereas before it was signed Sinai was held by Israel, now Sinai is in Egyptian hands.

Egyptians will admit that that indeed is all the peace treaty was intended to achieve.

The tragedy is that it was all so predictable.