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RABIN'S RISKS WON'T BRING PEACE

IT was in August 1975, during his first term as prime minister, that Mr Rabin discovered the formula for "improving relations" with the US.

They had been at a very low ebb because of his earlier rejection of the demand by secretary of state Kissinger - who had been primed by Egyptian president Sadat - for territorial concessions in Sinai. So, in August, the Rabin government agreed to give up what in March he had described as territory "vital to Israel's security" - which included the Gidi and Mitla passes, and also the Abu Rodeis oilfield. (Loss of Abu Rodeis compelled Israel to spend billions a year on oil.) In a twinkling, then, relations improved, and Washington, in return, made a major pledge: to supply Israel with the upcoming F15s. When, three years later, the planes reached production, this pledge, be it remembered, was violated by the new president, Carter, who refused to supply the planes unless Congress authorized him to sell F15s also to Saudi Arabia; and the pledge was violated further, in 1981, by the Reagan administration when it supplied the Saudis with enhanced-offensive equipment for the F15 - thus stultifying completely the original "concession" to Israel. Washington's other notable pledge in 1975 was to refrain from any discourse with the PLO terrorists as long as they refused "to recognize Israel's right to exist" and to accept Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338.

So, coming to power in 1992 with sweet recollections of 1975, Rabin made plain that his most important objective was to coordinate policy with the US. He lost no time in taking the first crucial steps toward "freezing the settlements" in Judea, Samaria and Gaza. Then he launched his publicity campaign for territorial surrender on the Golan.

Indications abound that he reaffirmed his acquiescence in his first conversation with President Clinton last month. Rabin's crowning achievement in Washington was the almost musical harmonies at the joint press conference with Clinton. Rabin's deep-voiced announcement that he was prepared to "pull back on the Golan Heights" and to "take risks for peace" was followed at once by Clinton's tenor assurance: "I have told him that our role is to help minimize those risks." It is surely reasonable that the slogan of "risks for peace" that Rabin has adopted, and the risks that Clinton promises "to help minimize" should be translated from the realm of quick-fix rhetoric to the discipline of logical dissection.

What risks are they talking about? Clinton does not specify because he, after all, has not thought it through; Rabin - because he does not want to think too much about it. THE answer, however, is simple. The "risk" involved is that even the maximum sacrifice of territory Rabin can offer will not bring peace at all.

For it is not peace that is in the mind of the Arabs. If they are offered a part of the Golan or part of the territory of Judea, Samaria and Gaza, they will persist in their demand for "the lot." If they are offered "the lot" without Jerusalem, they will persist in their demand for Jerusalem - accompanied, implicitly or explicitly, by the threat of war if they don't get it. Up to this point, there is no reason to expect Washington to lift a finger to help "minimize the risks." For all the Arab demands - adding up to the reduction of Israel to the 1949 Armistice lines, including the surrender of sovereignty in Jerusalem -

have been encouraged, indeed even promoted, by American policy.

Here the Arabs would bring into play their oft-articulated condition: no peace without implementation of the "right of return" - of the 1948 "refugees" - to Haifa, Jaffa, Acre et al. This means the physical dismantlement of the Jewish State. The sequence of events may be different, but at some point in the scenario of a progressively weakened Israel, the Arabs would assuredly see what seems to them a feasible chance to accomplish their ultimate aim.

It is to be found in one brutal formulation or another throughout the Arab Moslem anti-Israel literature. Its most explicit expression, however, comes from the sophisticated philosophical, relentlessly single-minded Arab intelligentsia. They are prepared to offer Israel peace, provided it "turns its back on Zionism and adopts 'Arabization.'" The Jews of Israel could then become a protected religious minority (dhimmis) in accordance with Moslem tradition.

A leading exponent of this idea, Doctor Boutros Ghali, enunciated it in a series of rhetorical questions. "Will Israel agree to become part of the region? Or does the nature of Zionist existence prevent Israel's assimilation in the Arab homeland? Will Israel turn into a Jewish people with an Arab character among the united Arab peoples? Or do these peace-bearing ideas lack foundation in fact, so that the conflict will go on for dozens of years, and a fifth Arab-Israel war will break out, and a sixth and seventh after it?" Later, when asked what if "Israel continues to believe that its self-determination requires that it maintains its Jewish character and