

March 30, 1979

### **The Bare Realities**

An official statement has explained that the 76 Arab terrorists released by the Government — all of them convicted of murder, or attempted murder of Israeli civilians — were exchanged for one prisoner held by the PLO.

This explanation of a monstrous act is a new government insult to the public intelligence. The truth is that for some time Egypt had pressed the government to add various “gestures” to the price she is already paying for the “peace treaty”. One of them was to release “security” prisoners.

The release of the 76 was a characteristically irresponsible exhibitionist gesture of “goodwill”. Since the release, the government has actually sat in conclave to consider the Egyptian request to free more prisoners.

Why does Sadat press for the release of PLO terrorists? They are not Egyptians. Their propaganda machine is waging a violent war of words against him, and against Egypt. Why, on the eve of signing a treaty with Israel, did he demand this self-mutilating gesture from Israel?

There is, in fact, no mystery. Sadat knows that their release appreciably strengthens the PLO’s fighting arm, and fortifies the morale of the whole Arab terrorist community. He knows it is a mathematical certainty that the release will cost the lives of more Israeli men, women and children.

At this moment, such requests of Israel are the only way Sadat can fulfill the Egyptian pledge to help the PLO attain its objective — a pledge he constantly reiterates. The very act of asking for the release of PLO members, is stark testimony to Sadat’s attitude to Israel, to its people, especially to the mothers whom he has claimed as his “allies” in Israel — and to the nature of the peace he has in mind for Israel.

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Sadat’s promotion of the PLO cause is part of his brilliant performance to ensure for himself in the “peace” treaty an escape clause from the single undertaking that could have any meaning: to keep the peace. He inserted in the heart of the treaty a legitimation of Egypt’s future adherence to the all-Arab purpose of making war on Israel when the time is ripe. Hence the crisis in the negotiations after November, and the subsequent peripatetic diplomacy between Jerusalem, Washington and Cairo.

Article Six of the treaty — denied him that legitimation. As it stood, Egypt could not in any circumstances claim that going “to the aid of an Arab state attacked by Israel” was sanctioned by the treaty. Then, acting boldly as usual, and knowing that even his most outrageous demands on Israel would be backed by Washington, Sadat made this most outrageous demand that the treaty be suitably tailored and turned into a sham, a treaty for war, as the prime minister described it.

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The government had pledged itself not to give an inch, not even to negotiate, on Article 6. How indeed could there be any negotiation about what the prime minister had described as the “heart of the treaty?”

But negotiate he did. Now we have a supplement to Article 6, which denudes it of any coherent meaning. This is how it reads: “It is agreed by the parties that there is no assertion that this treaty prevails over other treaties or agreements or that other treaties or agreements prevail over this treaty. The foregoing is not to be so construed as contravening the provisions of Article 6 (5) of the treaty which reads as follows:

“Subject to Art. 103 of the UN Charter, in the event of a conflict between the obligations of the parties under the present treaty and any of their other obligations, the obligations under this treaty will be binding and implemented”.

The plain effect of this document is to replace the unequivocal ban on Egypt’s making war on Israel by an ambiguous mishmash which will enable Egypt, when she makes war on Israel in concert with other Arab states, to flaunt this document.

It is true that Israel’s prime minister will then be entitled to take the first plane to Washington, together with his legal advisers, and there, meeting the President with *his* legal advisers, complain bitterly.

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This was, of course, not the only condition the prime minister and the foreign minister previously had described as “impossible,” which was in the end accepted by a bewildered Cabinet. That had been the obviously sane reaction to the suggestion that Israel should agree to a timetable for implementing the autonomy plan laid down in the Camp David agreement.

Now we have a timetable. Negotiations are to be opened one month after the signing of the “peace” treaty, and Israel has undertaken to complete the negotiations within a year.

With whom will Israel negotiate? Neither Jordan nor the Palestinian Arabs show any signs of willingness to do so. Israel can, rationally, negotiate only with Egypt. These undertakings are patently nonsensical.

Yet there may be method, American and Egyptian, in this madness. Why should the Palestinian Arabs and Hussein not be prepared to negotiate? They are, after all, perfectly aware of the magnitude of the concessions Israel has made in the plan for full autonomy, and the decisive power they will be wielding in the negotiations on the final sovereignty of Judea, Samaria and Gaza. But their very intransigence strengthens Sadat’s (and Washington’s) hand in their insistence on further, immediate, Israeli concessions.

“Come now,” Sadat will say. “You offered me Sinai as a preliminary gesture before we ever started negotiating. You cannot be less generous to the Palestinians, or to Hussein”. ‘From Washington, the Saunders and the Athertons energetically will renew the specific demands which they have been proclaiming for many months. The central demand, of course, is for Israel to give up “eastern Jerusalem”. This much-publicized many-pronged American campaign, opened immediately after the Camp David accord, already has inspired Arab militants in the Old City to launch some tentative, teenage violence.

Indeed, the peace treaty had not yet been signed when Sadat was already calling for a number of “gestures” — such as the withdrawal of Israel Army Headquarters from Beit El in Judea and from Gaza (which should, under the Camp David agreements, be part of the withdrawal *after* the setting up of the autonomy administration). The demands for “gestures” will now rain down thick and fast upon the Israeli Government — in order to bring about a dismantling of Israeli authority and the Facilitation of chaos and violence; in order to “encourage” the Palestinians and Jordan to negotiate, or to “bring home” to Israel that her best course is to give up Judea and Samaria and Gaza without more “ado”.

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What will this government do? We can only judge by its record. This is the government that started the process by unilaterally offering up Sinai, while announcing it would hold on to airfields and on no account abandon Jewish settlements. Before he went to Camp David, the prime minister personally assured residents of Yamit that if he were pressed to dismantle the settlements he would pack his bags and come home. Then he, and the government, agreed to give up both airfields and settlements.

This is the government which unilaterally proposed a plan of administrative autonomy for Judea, Samaria and Gaza *to follow* the peace treaty; then agreed on a plan of full autonomy for the “West Bank” which would put an end to Israeli rule, *before* negotiations for a peace treaty with Jordan.

This government started out in its autonomy plan by laying down that the internal security in the area would be controlled by Israel, and ended up by agreeing to the control of internal security by the Arab autonomous council which will set up its own “strong police force” for the purpose. This is the government which began by predicating the maintenance of Israel Defence Forces strength and dispositions in Judea, Samaria and Gaza, and ended by agreeing to a “withdrawal” of the army and the redistribution of its reduced strength in “locations to be agreed on”. As this was being written, Israeli Radio announced that the government has already agreed, as a gesture, to withdraw the army headquarters from Gaza and from Beit El (as requested, without any pressure, by Sadat).

This is the government, which laid down, in its autonomy plan, that Jewish settlement in Judea, Samaria and Gaza would continue (which was, on the face of it, reasonable, as control of government lands would be in Israel’s hands); and then signed the Camp David agreement, where no mention is made of Jewish settlement.

This is the government which signed the historic Camp David agreement, which contains not one single word about the relationship of the Jewish people to Eretz Yisrael, nor of its historic and political rights to its only homeland, nor even a hint of the true cause of the conflict (which led the Arab states, including Egypt, to try to prevent its very birth in 1948).

Not one single word. But the agreement is replete with the rhetoric of Arab propaganda. It implicitly accepts the Arab version of the conflict (the “Palestinian problem”), and explicitly announces its acceptance not only of the Arab formula of “the legitimate rights” and the “just aspirations” of the Palestinian people, but spells out the principle that in the determination of the future final status of the “West Bank” and Gaza, it is the Palestinian Arabs who will have the last word.

The catalogue is long. This is the government which, step by step, whether with or without initial resistance, surrendered Israeli position after position, succumbed to every Egyptian or American demand until, in order to find more favour in their eyes, it even let loose those 76 dedicated terrorists.

Perhaps this is the most significant indication of how the government is likely to behave under pressure in the fateful coming months.