

June 30, 1978

To Talk Turkey to Mr. Mondale

The Mayor of Jerusalem declared this week that he would not receive the Vice-President of the United States if — as has been reported from Washington — Mr. Mondale refuses to accept an official Israeli escort on his visit to the Old City (and thus demonstrates non-recognition of the unification of the city and of Israeli rule in it).

Mr. Kollek said: “If Mr. Mondale tries to draw a distinction between west and east, and emphasizes by his actions the division of the city to which we put an end, I shall not receive him. When somebody spits at you, you cannot close your eyes and call it rain”.

If these words of the Mayor of Jerusalem have been quoted in the United States, they have undoubtedly raised Israel’s prestige. It is desirable however that their background should be explained to the American public, so that they might understand how deeply Israel is insulted by the idea of non-recognition and the political injustice and the historical distortion that gave birth to the idea.

On the question of Jerusalem the United States has for long manifested its contempt for international law, for fair dealing and logic in relations between nations. The previous — Jordanian — regime in Jerusalem was by any standard illegal. It was established as the result of a bloody act of aggression by the Kingdom of Transjordan and of its subsequent illegal annexation. The Jordanian government had no rights whatsoever in Jerusalem. It is these non-existent rights that the United States insists on protecting.

Israeli rule in Jerusalem was established as a consequence of the repulse of a further act of aggression by Jordan. It was based on a clearly defensive act, and it is unquestionably legal. Concomitantly the city was united; her natural life as a city, her golden gleam as a city holy to Jews and to Christians, and the freedom of approach to the holy places of all three religions were restored. Nevertheless, out of political calculation — not to annoy the Arabs (who have oil) — this great American Power behaves as she does. This is the reaction that should be occupying the media in the United States these days.

Is it not strange that in the context of a visit by Vice-President Mondale — whose declared purpose is to demonstrate the friendship of his country for Israel — an idea has been mooted in the Washington Establishment which is equivalent, according to the Mayor of Jerusalem, to spitting in Israel’s face? Is this how one demonstrates friendship? The answer is: Maybe. Maybe there is also a sort of friendship that expresses itself by the one side spitting while the other side, in all friendship, wipes off the spittle.

It is, however, a saddening fact that the manifestations of “spitting” are increasing to such an extent that Israel’s friends in the United States have begun to see in them signs of an anti-Israeli tendency.

It now turns out that Mr. Mondale's visit is not intended merely as a ceremonial gesture towards Israel on the State's thirtieth birthday, but is assuming a clearly political complexion. It will be followed by a "parallel" visit to Egypt — whose people has no special reason at this moment for festivity, unless it be in celebration of the abolition of the last remnants of democracy in that country.

Mr. Mondale's visit to Jerusalem will be the first since the US administration managed to push through, in the Senate, the decision for the supply of planes to Saudi Arabia. It is desirable therefore that the Israeli government should not allow itself to be drawn into discussion on subjects likely to blur the significance of that decision. The government, as host, should raise all the questions that have begun troubling us as the result of American pronouncements and acts whose letter and spirit are not compatible with friendly relations.

The expressions of the administration in Washington towards Israel have become blatantly dictatorial in content and supercilious in style. Together with the "questions" that it conveyed to Israel — which in themselves were clearly conceived to press Israel to "amend" and broaden the "peace plan" — it also sent along the answers it required. The "questions" were not conveyed in decent diplomatic discretion but were blazoned forth to the whole world (and the "answers" were intended, after all to satisfy all the Arab demands). When the government of Israel failed to give the dictated answers, it was publicly reproved by an angry President of the United States. He subsequently upbraided Israel once again for having dared to publish Cairo's broadcast reply to the "peace proposals" before Sadat could launch a propaganda campaign about it.

There is no need for more examples. Advantage should be taken of Mr. Mondale's visit to convey a protest, dignified but sharp, at Washington's behavior — which does not reflect friendly gestures, nor does it accord with even the minimal norms of correct international relations. The Americans not only flaunt a display of contempt for the government of Israel, but a major distortion of the special relations, based on common interests, of the two States.

The clarification which should be conducted with the Vice-President however should not be concerned with form and style alone but with the major policy that they reflect. It must certainly embrace the symptoms of hostility to the basic interests of Israel that have become apparent in the application of American foreign policy in the Middle East.

It must be impressed upon Mr. Mondale that the Israeli government cannot ignore the grave implications of this policy and has no right to swallow with diplomatic courtesy the bland but absurd explanations that issue regularly from Washington. For example: that supplying planes to Saudi Arabia and to Egypt in violation of an undertaking to Israel — and even reducing the number of planes to which she is entitled — ensures the peace and the stability of the Middle East.

This attempt to mislead, which is also an insult to the intelligence, only compounds the gravity of the offence. The strong impression has been created that the US Government has decided to reduce the status of its relations with Israel, and that in the scale of her priorities Israel's interests

— and in our specific circumstances, her security — are to be subject to the maintenance and the strengthening of Washington’s special relationship with Saudi Arabia and indeed with the Arabs in general.

There are many reasons and many factors inhibiting any American administration from “abandoning” Israel, and every administration would feel compelled to continue giving aid to Israel. The present administration however, more than any of its predecessors, behaves as though the interest is not mutual — and together with the aid it gives, it is conducting a campaign to weaken Israel as much as possible, and to blacken the name of its government. It thus facilitates the execution of a policy whose implications cannot be described except as most damaging to Israel. The planes’ deal, in all its aspects, is an exact exemplar of this process.

It must be said in defence of this administration that it was not the initiator of this policy, which had its significant beginnings in the days of Nixon and Ford, when the architect of policy was Secretary of State Kissinger.

It is, however, in the reign of Carter that we have reached the consummation of the ominous combination of violated undertakings (whose high price Israel paid in advance and in full), of tremendous strengthening — consciously — of our enemies, and the constant many pronged pressure to weaken us. Should the various moves of the US bear the desired fruit, their result will be a shrunken Israel, given over to the mercies of neighbours who threaten her — now on four fronts — and who dispose of tremendous quantities of the most sophisticated weaponry.

The administration is moving towards consummation of this realistic outcome — by direct pressure on Israel to withdraw from territories, and by psychological pressure, such as outbursts of rage by the President or undermining Israeli rule in east Jerusalem.

This reality cries out for a change in Israeli policy. It is time to put an end to the illusion that there is a dialogue in progress with the United States on the ways to achieve peace. The struggle is over the question whether Israel will fall into the trap of collaborating in satisfying Arab desires by way of Washington. The fact that Israel is aware of this truth, that it is seeing the picture whole, should dominate the talks that are about to take place with Mr. Mondale in Jerusalem; and the operative conclusion from its awareness should be the adaptation of Israeli policy to these circumstances.

Mr. Teddy Kallek reacted on the subject of east Jerusalem with dignity — reflecting, moreover, political wisdom. The same degree of dignity reflecting political wisdom is required in the totality of Israel’s relations with the United States.