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[The Middle East Conflict - Can it be solved?]

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There are two rivaling concepts about solving the ME conflict: the step for step strategy proposed by Kissinger and preferred by Sadat and his Arab friends (Saudi Arabia, other "moderate" and "capitalist" Arab countries as well) as opposed to the Geneva strategy pushed by the Soviet Union and by her friends in the Arab world, the more radical and "socialist" countries. "Geneva" would mean to discuss and hopefully "solve" the whole complex in one parcel under joint chairmanship of the USSR and USA.

[insert step for step]

The step for step solution can look back on initial successes: Kissinger managed to disengage the troops on the Egyptian Israeli front in January 1974 and on the Syrian front in May¹⁹ 74. But from then^{e)} on the attempts at further steps stagnated. The whole summer and autumn passed in preparatory maneuvers and discussions for a further step. Jordan wanted some disengagement on the Jordan river, but this came to nothing because of Israeli diffidence and later because the Arab states decided that any territory recuperated from the west bank of the Jordan should go to the PLO not to Jordan. This was a consequence of the decision reached at the Arab summit in Rabat^{u)} (Oct. 74) which designated unanimously the PLO as the "sole legitimate representative of the Palestinians". Jordan had to accept this decision under pressure of all the Arab states.

A further step forward in the Golan proved impracticable because of the nature of the terrain. Only in the Sinai there seemed to be some hope of returning another slice of occupied Arab territory. Israel seemed to be ready to do so, but wanted a counter concession from Egypt, and from the summer 1974 onwards it became clear that the principal difficulty lay in the question: what can Egypt offer as a counterconcession to Israel, if the Israelis take their troops back to the Mitla and Giddi passes and evacuate

Abu Rodeis oil field? - Israel postulated a a declaration of non belligerence for "several years". Egypt declared it could not give any such assurance since the menace of a new war was the only real leverage Egypt had in order to compel the return of all the occupied territories and ^(obtain) the reinvindication of the rights of the Palestinians. ~~Further~~ Overmore Arab solidarity impeded any unilateral retreat from the war by Egypt, the ^(Arab) state with the biggest army, and Egypt had committed itself at Rabat not to take any unilateral steps towards peace. It seemed unlikely that Egypt would break such commitments because Arab solidarity on the financial and oil level are ~~its~~ ^{its} major hopes for extricating itself ^{of} from its very difficult financial and economic position, ^{once} after a possible solution to the conflict has been found. Kissingers personal diplomacy on his 9th round in the ME in February 1975 did not reach ^{attain} any results, but he declared himself willing to try again in March.

[After Geneva conference] ^{at Rabat} [The need for a rapid solution]

Whatever the outcome of these future negotiations about a step forward in Sinai, it has become clear that each step forward will become more and more difficult to accomplish. On the other hand there is some urgency to reach some progress, principally because the financial and social difficulties of Egypt are growing rapidly and can only be remedied after the state of war has been abolished. At present Egypt continues to spend one third of its budget on the army, ~~EL 1 300 Mio~~ ^{millions} another ~~700 Mio~~ ^{millions} went for food imports ^{in 1974} and they are expected to go up to 1. 250 Mio in 1975. The Russians insist on payments of the debt of 2 billions; services in Cairo and other ^{towns} wise have run down; the canal zone has to be rebuilt; population increase by nearly one ^{million} Mio a year; prime minister Hegazi knows that the best chance to rebuild the economic structure would be to return to a market mechanism thus short circuiting the hopelessly inefficient state bureaucracy. But this aim can only be reached when the Russians will no longer be necessary. ^{needed} They keep being needed as long as the

state of war continues. Hoped for investments from USA, Europe and the oil states have been slow in coming, apart from some government subsidies, because the economic system being what it is rentability in Egypt is not assured.

If there is no rapid progress towards peace there is a serious danger that Cairo will try another limited war, in the style of 1973, principally in order to speed things up. It could also be feared that Sadat's prestige continues to fall and that he would be overthrown if he engages the country into another lengthy period of "neither war nor peace". All this makes rapid progress imperative if a new war ~~xxxx~~ ^{is to be} ~~shall~~ be avoided.

On the Israeli side similar reasons apply: the temptation to try a preventive war will grow, the longer no peace solution is found; this for reasons of prestige of state and army; economic reasons and reasons of strategy (~~need~~ ^{strike} a blow before Egypt is fully reequipped).

The urgency of finding a solution makes it very likely that the Geneva conference will be called together rather soon if the step for step strategy exhausts itself.

[Dangers of Geneva]

US and Egyptian suspicions of Geneva are well founded. The principal danger would be "polarisation of the conference" as Sadat has declared publicly. This would mean the Russians giving strenuous support to the Arabs and forcing the Americans to defend the Israelis. If this should happen [?] the US would lose its present position as intermediary between the two sides and become the backer of one only, similar ~~as it was~~ ^{to the situation of} before and after 1967. Today such a position would be much more dangerous to the US and the whole Western alliance because of oil. Oil pressure from the Arab side would certainly increase if the US were clearly seen to defend Israel against the Arab-Russian demands. It seems likely to the

the author of this paper that this is the real reason for the Russian advocacy of Geneva: they hope to maneuver the US and the NATO countries into a position of backing Israel against the Arabs and to take the political and economic punishment consequent to this state of affairs. Or alternatively to be seen backing down to Russo-Arabic pressure, sacrificing Israel at least partially, and to hand a prestige victory to the Russians and their Arab friends.

Sadat has been diffident towards Geneva because he has already lived through a period of "polarisation", when the US backed Israel and the Russians the Arabs, and he has seen that this led to the blocking of the ME question, a long period of "neither war nor peace" and could even lead to the freezing of the big power frontiers (Berlin style) between Israel and Arabs. But if Sadat can not achieve progress with the help of the Americans (Kissinger's step by step) he will be forced willy nilly to accept the Geneva set up and to hope that oil pressure might this time make a difference and force the western countries to back down and ^{to} sacrifice Israel..

Political aims in case of a step for step, and in case of Geneva:

If the negotiations continue under the auspices of Kissinger as intermediary the final aims of the Arabs remain rather well defined and comparatively limited: return of all territories, including Jerusalem and foundation of a Palestinian state on the West Bank. But if the negotiations will be conducted at Geneva the Arabs will insist on more, this is clear already today: The Palestinians will come to Geneva, if they are begged to come, but they will aim at a Palestinian state in the frontiers of 1947, reasoning that this has been consecrated by the UN ^(partition resolution) before the 1948-9 war. Overmore they will see this state only as a first step towards their officially proclaimed final aim of a "democratic Palestine" where Jews and Arabs can live together. This clearly postulates ^{previous} destruction of the present Jewish state of Israel. In Geneva the more moderate

Arab states, principally Egypt, would have little ^{ch,} voice but to back the Palestinian demands, they have granted the Palestinians the right to decide their own political aims and strategy in advance (Rabat), and the balance of power ^{(among the Arab states,} seems to be such that the constellation effective at Rabat will also make itself felt at Geneva. Saudi Arabia is clearly decisive in this balance. In practice the Arab demands at Geneva, via the bias of the PLO, would go as far as the Saudi wanted them to go. The Russians ^(also an) have ~~xxx~~ interest in helping to maximise Arab demands, because in this way they will be able to maximise punishment for the West and for Israel; but they will probably be more cautious about it than the Saudis, because ^{(will,} they want to avoid a new war and the risks this would bring for the Super powers. However it is quite likely that they would gradually tighten the screw at Geneva if they could see the West and Israel either giving in gradually or weakening ^(economically) under oil pressure. Under the circumstances the only viable way for the US at Geneva would be to reach a previous understanding with the Soviet Union and to impose this on Israel, regardless of Israeli protests. But it is likely that the Russian price for such an understanding would be very high indeed, possibly exceeding the present day Arab official demands of all the territories and ^{of} a Palestinian mini-state.

[The role of the Palestinians]

In all this the Palestinians play the role of the ~~xxxxxxxx~~ variable (the other demand: "all the territories" being fixed). They can be used by the Russians and by the Arab radicals in order to increase their demands whenever there seems to be scope for doing so. For this it is sufficient to give them encouragement. The inner structure of the PLO is such that the Organisation is forced to ^{demand} take / always the maximum imaginable. Arafat has to count with the double opposition of the extremist groups (front du refus; PFLP, Jibril group, Tahrir-group, backed by Irak, etc.) and of the rank and file of all organisations (who are motivated by the desire to return to their homes in

present day Israel). He can only content himself with ~~xxxx~~ less than the maximum demand of a "Democratic Palestine in all of Palestine" if he can prove ~~xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx~~convincingly to his opponents that there is no other feasible solution than to accept a part of Palestine (at least provisionally). Therefore, if any bigger power ~~xxxx~~ ^{gives} reasons to ~~xxxx~~ (The Palestinians ~~xxxxxxx~~ to hope for more, they will not accept any compromise for a lesser solution. The Soviet Union can use the PLO as an inflatable ^{(balloon} ~~xxxxxx~~, regulating their posture according to the needs and circumstances of the negotiations~~x~~ at Geneva.

How they will be used depends on the judgement one conceives of Soviet aims. If one believes that they ^{USSR} "really" want peace in the ME one has to assume the balloon will be deflated in the critical moment; but if one assumes, with the present writer, that they want rather a prolonged wrangle with the West and the USA about the future of the Middle East, stopping short of war but forcing the US and Europe into the position of defenders and backers of Israel, while they back the Arabs and their oil, in that case one would expect them to inflate the balloon just sufficiently to avoid a hot war but to keep the cold ME war going.

[Conclusion]

It seems difficult for the Americans alone to achieve a near East settlement, except if they did it by forcing Israel to give in "all the way", however much this might be. If they are unwilling to do this, they will be forced to go to Geneva rather earlier than later, and there they risk to be degraded to the role of defenders of Israel and to accept the dislike of the Arabs with all the economic consequences ~~that~~ are inherent in this role. In Geneva a settlement seems possible only with the collaboration ^{of} the USSR. For this a price will have to be paid. It is possible, in the eyes of the writer even probable, that the Russians will put this price high enough for the US to be unwilling to pay it. In that case the con-

flict will drag on indefinitely; ^(under those circumstances) talk in Geneva will earlier or
 later make room for a new and probably futile attempt to solve
 the conflict by an act of war. This might be contained by the
 Superpowers ⁽ⁱⁿ⁾ / similarly ^(as in 1973) to the war of 1973 without conceding victory
 to either side; or else it might prove ^{UN} uncontrollable, because of its
^{explosive} unavoidable petroleum ingredient, and in that case it ^{could} ~~might~~ prove
 to be the beginning of the Third World War.

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