

Chapter VI

“I’d Rather Commit Suicide, Political or Otherwise, Than Hurt Israel”

During the 1976 campaign Carter told his staff:

We have to be cautious. We don’t want to offend anybody. ... I don’t want any more statements on the Middle East or Lebanon. Jackson has all the Jews anyway. It doesn’t matter how far we go. I don’t get over four percent of the Jewish vote anyway, so forget it. We get the Christians.

Speaking to a student group on December 9, 1975, Carter called for recognition of the “rights of Palestinian people,” whose representative, the P.L.O., “must recognize the rights of Israel.” Carter also said that “Israel will have to withdraw to the 1967 boundaries.” However, in a speech at a Jewish center in Elizabeth, New Jersey, on June 6, 1976, Carter said:

Final borders between Israel and her neighbors should be determined in direct negotiations between the parties, and they should not be imposed from outside.

Before the 1976 election, Carter’s statements on the Middle East were rare and “cautious.” In 1976, 87% of the Jewish vote went for him.

Once elected, Carter made the Middle East the central issue of his foreign policy and began determining Israeli borders and imposing the settlement from outside. He declared in March 1977 that the Palestinian people must have a “homeland or entity,” and Israel “must withdraw to 1967 borders with minor adjustments.” His hostility to Israel, however, manifested itself immediately after his inauguration, when he vetoed the Israeli decision to sell to Ecuador Z,4 Israeli-made Kfir fighter bombers outfitted with American engines, and ordered the State Department to protest Israeli drilling for oil in the Gulf of Suez. The drilling was,

according to the protest, “not helpful to efforts to get peace negotiations under way.

By that time Carter’s efforts were already underway. Carter decided to reverse President Ford’s promise to provide Israel with GBU-72’s, bombs capable of destroying concrete bunkers and missile sites. Early in February 1977 a high Defense Department official suggested to several American firms “not to deal with Israel.” The story was leaked to the press, raising questions in Congress. Israelis, referring to Carter’s innovations, stated “we could tell that he was headed in the wrong direction.”

When Carter in March 1977 called for a “Palestinian homeland or entity” and for an Israeli retreat to “the 1967 borders with minor adjustments” as the preconditions for a peace settlement to be formalized at Geneva, Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin in a Washington T.V. interview stated “without any qualification” that Israel will not return to the 1967 borders. A few days later, speaking at a town meeting in Massachusetts, Carter assailed Rabin for not agreeing to his precondition. Rabin complained later that the Israeli Labor Party’s defeat in the May 1977 election stemmed from Carter’s demands on Israel. This complaint is not without foundation. By the time of the elections, the Israeli public began to understand Carter’s “signals.” A recent Russian immigrant in Israel made an observation: “Carter sounds more like an Arab than an American President. There seems to be nobody but Begin to stand up to him. If Begin is elected, let Carter swing his scythe - it will break against Begin’s rock.”

When Carter declared Israeli settlements on the West Bank “illegal” and “obstacles to peace,” Begin authorized new settlements. Carter, according to *U.S. News and World Report*, was “burning angry.” When the Israelis, in response to the “Katiusha” rocket attack from Lebanon retaliated by air strikes at Palestinian guerrilla bases, “Carter’s initial reaction.., was one of strong anger,” but “he yielded to advisers who urged him to moderate his public criticism in

order to avoid stirring up the American Jewish community.” Following this advice Carter justified the Israeli air strikes as a regrettable but understandable retaliation. He also justified Begin’s authorization of new settlements as the understandable policy of a leader, who like Carter, had to fulfill his election promises. When following Carter’s lead, the U.N. General Assembly declared the Israeli settlements “illegal,” Carter ordered Andrew Young to abstain from the vote, thus displaying American “evenhandedness” in the Arab-Israeli conflict. Actually, Carter simply decided to “avoid stirring up the American Jewish Community.”

Carter, however, can’t help stirring it up. On September 12, 1977, he announced his decision to invite Palestinian representatives to the Geneva Conference to take part in negotiations of what Carter liked to describe as “comprehensive peace.” The *New York Times* editorial described Carter’s decision as “sensible.” But some Jews felt that it was “insensitive” because it coincided with the beginning, on September 12, of the Jewish New Year. It was reported that the turnout of worshipers was “unusually high.” They perhaps felt the need this time for a special prayer, sensing that the timing of Carter’s innovation was not incidental, and that his ‘sensitivity’ was of a morbidly spiteful nature.

Carter’s initial transparent hostility towards Egyptian-Israeli rapprochement in November 1977 struck many observers. Sadat’s trip to Jerusalem stunned the White House and then slowly, very slowly, extracted from Carter a resentful and grudging approval. The *New York Times* did not miss that peculiar reaction.

The editorial “United States as Sphinx” claimed:

The Carter Administration’s enthusiasm for President Sadat’s diplomacy could freeze the Nile. It has been grudging, chilling and altogether unworthy of the United States, which should be cheering and rewarding every act of moderation in the Middle East.

Carter's role in achieving agreement between Sadat and Begin has been widely and persistently publicized as that of a successful conciliator, and the Camp David accord presented as Carter's major foreign policy triumph.

Although President Ford pointed to Carter's uncanny ability to make himself the hero of disasters he himself created, in the case of the Camp David accord Carter managed to appear the hero of the success which he had tried his best to prevent. The myth of Carter's Camp David triumph" needs to be dispelled. Carter's policy towards Israel is perhaps the most telling example of his provocations, which nearly plunged the Middle East into a war. It was prevented only by Sadat's dramatic voyage to Jerusalem. Wars that do not happen leave almost no traces in history textbooks. A review of how and why these wars were avoided might contain some valuable lessons.

On November 9, 1977, Sadat, in a long and emotional speech to the Egyptian Parliament, announced that "I am ready to go to the Israeli Parliament itself" to discuss peace. This statement was widely dismissed by the media as mere theatrical rhetoric. Begin, however, took it seriously. He immediately announced that he welcomed Sadat's visit and, using American ambassadors as messenger boys, sent Sadat an official invitation. No attention was paid in the press to one startling peculiarity: Sadat insisted that Begin postpone his long scheduled trip to England so that Sadat could come to Jerusalem within a few days. Begin postponed his trip, and Sadat's plane touched down at Ben-Gurion Airport minutes after the end of Shabbat, November 19.

Sadat's visit was described by the media as "largely symbolic." Harry Reasoner pointed to the "sheer drama of the pictures." John O'Connor observed that "as various network commentators rattled on about boggled minds, astonished ears and startled eyes, the images alone- moving and even thrilling - told all." The fact of the matter was, however, that images alone did not tell all, nor did they reveal anything

about the real drama that had suddenly forced Sadat to go to Israel and instilled him with the sense of urgency.

Sadat knew about the impending outbreak within days of an Arab-Israeli war, in which Egypt most definitely would have been involved had he not gone to Israel. "There was only a week or ten days, something like that," said Sadat, referring to the time between his November 9 statement in the Egyptian Parliament and the outbreak, as he put it, of a "terrible, terrible" war. "Before I made that speech in the Parliament, I discussed it only with my Foreign Minister, Ismail Fahmy, who later resigned. He was not with the Knesset initiative at all."

Directly and by innuendo, the White House, and especially Jody Powell, attempted to create an impression that Sadat's initiative had been prompted by Carter's letter to Sadat which has never been made public. In line with this assertion, a number of commentators have argued that Carter, no less than Sadat and Begin, deserves "credit" for the "breakthrough." A breakthrough it certainly was, and in a peculiar sense Carter indeed deserves a "credit." "I received a personal letter from Carter in his handwriting in September. It was delivered by a special envoy in Cairo," revealed Sadat. "I read the letter. I wrote the answer in my handwriting. In my answer - for the first time I am revealing this - I said the whole situation needs some bold action." Sadat also revealed that Carter's letter was wax-sealed in several places and was a highly secret communication. When Sadat was asked whether Carter, in his letter, had advised him to go to Israel, Sadat replied: "No, the letter did not suggest this, but it made me think of a way out." People think of a way out when they feel trapped.

This is exactly how Sadat felt when he read Carter's letter. There is no way one can relate the content of a secret unpublished communication without having read it, but the circumstances under which Carter wrote his letter in September, 1977, Carter's subsequent "initiatives," Sadat's statements and his "bold actions," throw enough light on the

letter's mystery. On September 12, the State Department announced that the "Palestinians must be involved in the peacemaking process" and "their representatives will have to be at Geneva for the Palestinian question to be solved." One must assume that Carter repeated this idea in his September letter to Sadat. Carter's other idea, which actually sent Sadat flying to Israel, was to be spelled out in the statement of October 1, 1977 which struck the world, as Hitler used to say, "like a bolt from the blue." The statement offered Soviet-American "guarantees" and dictated "terms of settlement" of the Arab-Israeli conflict. For Sadat Soviet "guarantees" meant a mortal danger to Egypt in much the same way as they did to Israel. Nothing unites long-time adversaries more than a direct threat from a common enemy.

In September, 1977 Carter and the Soviet Ambassador, Anatoly Dobrynin, discussed the idea of the Soviet-American statement to be approved during the visit of Soviet Foreign Minister Andrey Gromyko to Washington on September 22. But before Gromyko's arrival Sadat was already edging towards rapprochement with Israel. By the time Carter offered Gromyko to prepare a Soviet draft of the statement and then, toward the end of September, agreed to accept the Soviet version, Sadat already had made his first overtures to Israel.

"Dayan Shuttle a Mystery" announced London's *Daily Telegraph*. It was rumored that Moshe Dayan, Israeli Foreign Minister at the time, had a secret meeting with an important Arab official somewhere in Europe. Actually Dayan, having disguised himself "by taking off his famous black eye patch and donning dark glasses and a diplomat's Homburg hat," flew to Tangier for a secret rendezvous with Morocco's King Hassan II. Hassan informed Dayan that "if negotiations break down and the alternative is war, Egypt would have to seek Russian military aid" and that such a prospect of Soviet intervention would threaten President Sadat's regime. Therefore, "Egypt would consider interim talks as a fallback if the Geneva negotiations failed." This communication meant that Sadat was seeking a separate negotiation with

Israel as a “way out” of a war that would bring about Soviet-American intervention.

“Moscow hasn’t liked me or my Government for years now. The Russians do not like anybody who rejects their control,” said Sadat. The Soviets do not like Morocco’s King Hassan either, and for the same reason. They wage a proxy war against him in Western Sahara. Polisario forces supplied by Soviet arms and supported by “Socialist” Algeria demand “self-determination” for the vast territory populated by 75,000 desert dwellers. What actually is at stake is a Soviet stronghold along the important Atlantic coastline and rich phosphate deposits. Understandably, Sadat found in pro-Western King Hassan a most natural ally, and the best possible intermediary in negotiations with Israel. Carter’s policy toward Morocco zigzagged in his typical fashion of ambivalence and inconsistency.

Sadat could not fail to notice that the Soviet-American statement of October 1 coincided with the almost simultaneous decision by Carter early in October 1977 to allow the massive Soviet and Cuban involvement in the Horn of Africa to proceed unchecked, threatening the sea routes from the oil rich Persian Gulf into the Indian Ocean, and posing a direct threat to Saudi Arabia, Iran, Oman and Arab Emirates. The Soviets took over Aden Naval facilities and armed their ally, the Marxist regime of South Yemen.

For Sadat the “Palestinian issue” is not the core or the heart of the problem in the Middle East but an emotional appeal that serves as a smoke screen behind which the Soviets pursue their schemes. It was not a coincidence, said Sadat, that Syria, Libya, Algeria, Iraq, South Yemen and the PLO formed the “so-called Rejectionist Front and the fact that they all received their support and arms from Moscow.” He broke diplomatic relations with all those countries and expelled the PLO organization from Egypt. He described the “rejectionist” leaders as “dwarfs,” “stooges” and “impostors,” as well as “nuts.”

Carter's simultaneous decisions to tolerate a Soviet takeover of the Horn of Africa and to invite the Soviets as partners to "guarantee" the "comprehensive peace" between Arab countries and Israel appeared to Sadat as a Soviet-American "deal" signifying Carter's consent to Soviet military presence in Africa and on Arab-Israeli borders. To Sadat it was a threatening prospect. Why did Carter give the Soviets what they had failed to secure during previous administrations? During the last days of the Johnson Administration in mid-January, 1969, the Soviets insisted on a joint Soviet-American intervention in an Arab-Israeli war which they tried to provoke. The American note unequivocally ruled out any Soviet military intervention.

In September, 1970, when the Soviets unleashed Syrians and Palestinian guerrillas on King Hussein of Jordan, Nixon proclaimed a military alert. Israeli troops were moved into position to attack Syrian tanks advancing on Amman. Nixon and Golda Meir coordinated their moves. Nixon warned the Soviets to stay out of the conflict and to halt Syrian intervention. The Syrians withdrew. King Hussein crushed and expelled the Palestinian guerrillas. The Syrian-Israeli war did not take place.

On June 16, 1973 Brezhnev arrived in Washington for the summit meeting with Nixon. That same day *The Washington Post* published one of its "Deep Throat" revelations and the Watergate special prosecutor, Archibald Cox, held a press conference announcing the possibility of indicting Nixon before an impeachment had taken place. Several days later the summit moved to San Clemente. Nixon, clad in pajamas, reading in his bedroom, received at 10:30 p.m. Kissinger's message: "The Russians wanted to talk." "This time," stated Nixon,

the subject was the Middle East, with Brezhnev trying to browbeat me into imposing on Israel a settlement based on Arab terms. He kept hammering at what he described as the need for the two of us to agree, if only privately, on a set of 'principles'. He cited the withdrawal of Israeli

troops from all occupied territories, the recognition of national boundaries, the free passage of ships through the Suez Canal, and international guarantees of the settlement.

Nixon replied that there was

no way I could agree on such 'principles' without prejudicing Israel's rights. . . . Brezhnev was blunt and adamant. He said that without at least an informal agreement on such principles he would be leaving this summit empty handed. He even hinted that without such an agreement on principles he could not guarantee that the war would not resume. At one point he made a show of looking at his watch and frowning his brow. 'Perhaps I am tiring you out,' he said, 'But we must reach an understanding.' As firmly as he kept demanding that we agree on such principles - in effect, that we jointly impose a settlement that would heavily favor the Arabs - I refused.

Nixon further wrote that his agreement to Brezhnev demand "*would amount to our abandoning Israel.... I am confident that the firmness I showed that night reinforced the seriousness of the message I conveyed to the Soviets when I ordered a military alert four months later during the Yom Kippur War.*"

In October 1973, the Watergate scandal was reaching its crescendo and American newspaper headlines were proclaiming, "Nixon is Paralyzed." That convinced the Soviets that Nixon's weakness would allow them an opportunity to provoke an Arab-Israeli war and then to intervene with impunity. They acted fast. Neither American nor Israeli intelligence had time to evaluate the significance of suddenly detected massive Soviet deliveries of military hardware to Egypt and Syria. Israel was caught unprepared and suffered initial defeats. "Get over there everything that flies," Nixon told Kissinger, ordering him to provide Israel with badly needed arms. When the Israelis rolled back and routed Egyptian and Syrian forces, the Soviets sent Nixon a threatening note demanding joint Soviet-American military

intervention. Had the U.S. refused to join them, the note warned, Soviet troops would intervene unilaterally to “guarantee peace.” Nixon’s response was prompt and unequivocal— he proclaimed a military alert and the Soviets backed down. Ironically, Nixon was accused in the press of provoking the conflict and proclaiming the military alert in order to “detract public attention from Watergate.” The fact of the matter was that, despite Watergate, Nixon prevented Soviet intervention, and thus avoided nuclear conflict.

The Soviet-American statement of October 1, 1977 boiled down to a very simple point - it sanctioned Soviet military intervention in advance. It also formalized Carter’s acceptance of Soviet “principles” and made official his agreement to impose, jointly with the Soviets, a settlement on Soviet terms, to be canonized at the Geneva conference. This was a major provocation.

The Soviets moved fast to carry out the schemes, which Nixon had firmly rejected. Sadat, this time, did not fail to recognize the Soviet ploy and decided not to play the role of a Soviet stooge. “The Soviet Union was starting its own tricks with the Syrians and the Palestinians,” said Sadat. He also revealed that Syrian President Assad “was not serious at all about going to Geneva.” Sadat realized this when, as he put it, “Assad sent a special envoy to me.” Assad’s special envoy brought a message very similar to the one that he had sent to Sadat in 1973 on the eve of the October War: get ready for war. It was in effect a Soviet message, or as Sadat put it, a Soviet “trick.” It coincided with Carter’s “handwritten” letter to Sadat, also delivered through a “special envoy.”

By November 9, Sadat knew that he had only a “week, or ten days, something like that” to extricate himself from “this dilemma” with which the Soviet-American statement had confronted him. All intelligence reports, as well as an analysis of his own military staff, conclusively proved that Israel was ready to deliver a “quick and decisive” defeat to any combination of Arab forces. Palestinian guerrillas in Lebanon attacked Israeli border towns with volleys of

Katiusha rockets on November 8 and 9. Israelis responded with massive air strikes against Palestinian bases in Southern Lebanon. Israeli's Defense Minister, Ezer Weizman, said that as a result of the rocket attacks on Israeli towns, "I regard the cease-fire as no longer existing."

Yassir Arafat, the PLO leader, arrived in Cairo on November 9, and declared that this was the time for "military action." Earlier when Carter's demands were announced on September 12, Arafat at that time declared that "now, we welcome war." PLO spokesmen at the same time announced that "armed struggle is the only retaliation to attempts at depriving the Palestinians of their national rights." In his November 9 speech announcing his readiness to go to Israel, Sadat mentioned that he had earlier received a telephone call from Assad. Most probably from this telephone conversation Sadat learned that within a week or ten days he was expected to join the Syrians in war against Israel. It looked like a replay of the Yom Kippur debacle. Why would the Syrians start a war at the time when their quick and decisive defeat could not be doubted? This question probably was on Sadat's mind, and the answer was obvious: the Soviets were not that much interested in an Arab victory, and in fact, they might have preferred another Arab defeat, in order to use it as a pretext to intervene and pick up the pieces. Most of all they were interested in the pieces of what would have been left of Egypt.

Sadat feared the worst. Various analyses and articles describing Israeli military superiority often also mentioned the Israeli "nuclear option." The Israelis have never confirmed, nor have they denied it. Their superiority in conventional weapons and the traditional "special relationship" with the U.S. (before Carter's innovations) ruled out the very need of a nuclear response. Israelis also had taken for granted American determination not to allow a Soviet military presence in the Middle East. Carter's innovations left those assumptions in shambles.

Israeli leaders bluntly described the situation in which

Israel found herself after the Soviet-American statement as a “crisis” and “unprecedented isolation.” As Kissinger put it, “Israel, maddened by isolation and the fear of an imposed peace, would withdraw in sullen intransigence.” If war would have broken out under such circumstances, it was reasonable to assume that Israel would have struck back with all the power in her possession, including the use of the “nuclear option,” and this is perhaps why Sadat envisioned a “terrible, terrible war.” Egypt, by far the strongest Arab military power, would have been the first to come under Israeli attack. One atomic bomb dropped on the Aswan Dam could release such a flood of water that it would wash off a good part of Egypt into the sea.

Sadat proved to be a responsible and foresighted statesman, acting in the best interest of his people. The enthusiasm his initiative produced among the Egyptian masses only proves that they, rationally or instinctively, understood what was at stake. And so did the Israelis. “The absence of alternatives clears the mind marvelously,” wrote Kissinger in an enlightening commentary. “There is no alternative to the Sadat-Begin negotiations. Geneva as a negotiating forum is dead. This is just as well.”

The Geneva conference, as it was proposed by Carter and the Soviets, would put Sadat in a vulnerable position because his proposals were subject to a veto by the Soviets, the Syrians and the Palestinians. Besides, it would have elevated the Soviets into the position of arbiter in the conflict. As for the Israelis, Geneva revived the specter of Munich, and on this point Begin was quite explicit. He pointed out that it was at Munich that Hitler demanded “self-determination” for Sudetan Germans, and after his demand was satisfied he proceeded to dismember Czechoslovakia. “May I state,” said Begin, “that never again will that concept [self-determination] be misused, because we’ll remember the 30’s, the late 30’s, and the result of this misuse.”

Carter’s demands for a Palestinian “homeland or entity” and his statements about the “legitimate rights” of Palestinian

people for “determination of their own future,” reinforced the analogy. Neither Sadat nor Begin, nor for that matter the press, missed the real meaning of those euphemisms which served only to disguise Carter’s demand for a Palestinian state. “Such a Palestinian state would have extinguished any prospect of peace and would have created a danger to the very existence of the Jewish state,” declared the Israeli Cabinet. “There has never been, and there won’t be a government in Israel that would agree to such conditions.”

So why did Carter suddenly decide to join the Soviets in an attempt to drag Israel, kicking and screaming, to Geneva? “The first and most important question about the new Soviet-American statement on the Middle East is, why?” asked *The New York Times* editorial on October 4. “President Carter must, once again, explain the motives of his diplomacy....” Carter first described the statement as “an achievement of unprecedented significance.” Confronted with an uproar of protests in this country and in Israel, Carter explained the statement away as an “innocuous document.” Actually Carter did not consider the statement a mistake or an innocuous document, although he seemed to have disavowed it. On February 13, 1978, Brzezinski, in his interview said that the statement was good but “we might have dealt” with it “in a somewhat different way.” The Administration might have “prepared the ground for greater understanding of the need for a U.S.-Soviet statement on the Middle East.” The “ground” Brzezinski was talking about was public opinion, which needed to be prepared for Carter’s confrontation with Begin, Israel and the American Jewish community.

Preparations for such a confrontation have been going on from the start of Carter’s Presidency. Carter, in his predictable fashion, intended at some point to “go to the people and stir up sentiment.” He threatened to do that in his exchange with Dayan on October 5, when he and the Soviets demanded from Israel to go to Geneva and to accept the “principles” of the joint statement “no later than December, 1977.” This was an ultimatum. The confrontation, described as “brutal,” lasted late into the night. Carter threatened Dayan

that he would “appeal to the friends of Israel in the United States” and accuse Israel of “stubbornness,” of being “an obstacle to peace,” and of “endangering the vital interests of America.” Dayan was not impressed. “We do not depend on the U.S. to save us,” he said. “Even if you wanted to send us soldiers, you couldn’t do it after Vietnam.... We count only on ourselves.” At this point Carter “appeared impressed with the monologue and perhaps surprised at some of the history” that Dayan had recounted. Turning to Vance, Carter ordered a “working paper” to Dayan’s liking to be prepared. “The tension dropped considerably.” The working paper completely negated the five-day-old “Soviet American Joint Declaration.” During the meeting Carter asked Dayan “Tell me, what makes you dissatisfied with the declaration?” “Everything,” said Dayan. “Let’s study it clause by clause,” said Carter. “There is no need,” Dayan replied. “The mere fact that you introduced the Russians into the arrangement is enough.”

After the working paper was signed, something peculiarly Carterian happened. Carter asked where Dayan was heading next. Dayan said he had a scheduled speaking appearance before a group of Jewish leaders in Chicago. Suddenly displaying his glib and ingratiating self, Carter said, “Do me a favor. Don’t attack me” - after having himself threatened Dayan to “appeal to the friends of Israel in the United States.” The working paper was sent to Arab countries where it seems to have disappeared into oblivion. But even before it arrived there, Vance stated that this document “is only a working paper.”

Jody Powell insisted that “we don’t want a public confrontation with the Jewish community over the Middle East.” Yet Powell revealed that such a confrontation was actually discussed. “I suppose,” said Powell, we might win it by convincing the majority of Americans that the policy was in the best interests of the country. But the fallout would be terrible. It would pit a small, identifiable minority against the majority: that’s a situation no society wants to get in.” It happened before in history. A small, identifiable minority has

been singled out as a scapegoat on a number of memorable occasions. A new Middle East war could be presented to the public as a “Jewish war” when another energy crisis may tilt the balance in Carter’s favor.

Brzezinski has been blamed for the Administration’s Middle East policy. He “threatened” to “persuade the President to go to the country to win support for a tough stand against Israel.” He said that a confrontation between the Jewish community and Carter “would be a calamity” and “would leave the President no choice but to go to the country and explain that the policy was in our national interests and Israel’s as well.” Actually, it is of no importance at all where Brzezinski stands on the issue. Carter dictates his policies, and the core of his authoritarian personality cries out against any suspicion that this or that adviser can influence his decisions. The tendency “to go to the people and stir up sentiment” is demonstrably Carter’s own, and for the Jewish community to make Brzezinski a whipping boy is nothing less than a transparent attempt to avoid facing the uncomfortable truth. The very fact that such a calamity has been openly entertained by Carter and his advisers and widely discussed in the press brings one to the shocking realization of how far Carter has traveled in his “revolutionizing” of this country. Who, in his right mind, could imagine in January, 1977, that less than a year later such a “confrontation” between an American President and the Jewish community could become a distinct possibility?

It was reported that early in February 1978 Carter again “concluded” that “Israel must yield” all the disputed territories— the West Bank, Gaza and all of Sinai— in order for the “peace efforts to succeed,” and that “the Administration was preparing for a possibility of another period of sharp exchanges with Israel and even a bitter political confrontation.... In preparation of what one official foresaw as ‘sparks flying’ President Carter, Vice-President Mondale, Secretary of State Cyrus R. Vance and others have held a series of unusual private briefings for members of Congress and American Jewish leaders in recent days. The

purpose was to put forth the Administration's Middle East views in advance of meetings with Israeli leaders."

To impress the public with Israeli "wickedness", the Administration began to peddle to the press reports that Begin and Dayan had "promised" not to build new settlements, but reneged on their word. Begin and Dayan stated that they never promised Carter anything like that. Someone was lying. It turned out it was Carter—he lied and it was also he who caught himself lying. The Israeli Ambassador in Washington pointed out that after discussions with Begin in Washington, Carter, in his July 29, 1978, press conference had stated that "Mr. Begin did not give me any promise about his actions on the settlement question... he was certainly aware of our concern, but he did not give me any commitments about what he would do."

Begin is not an "outsider" who mysteriously appeared from nowhere. He has been around for a long time. What he says today he has been saying his whole life - as a Zionist youth leader in Poland, as a prisoner in Soviet concentration camps, as a leader in the underground in Palestine during the British Mandate, as opposition leader in the Knesset, and now as Prime Minister. His stand on the settlement issue during the election and after his victory in May 1976 remained unchanged. In his February 15, 1978, press conference in Jerusalem he said: "I say what I mean. And I mean what I say." And when he says that the settlements are "legal, legitimate and essential," and that he will continue to build them, he means it.

The prediction about sparks flying was correct. These sparks fly every time Carter's scythe hits Begin's rock. The confrontation between "the most powerful man in the world" and "the small, identifiable minority" which from the fullness of its arrogance and impudence refuses to "submit" to his "authority," has been in progress since Carter's inauguration. "It is not our desire to in any way further or prolong public debate over the settlements," said Jody Powell on February 13, 1978 after reading Carter's statement on the settlement

issue. He also said that the debate “was not a process we choose to become involved in.” He was lying again. Bitter confrontation with sparks flying is precisely the process Carter chose to become involved in. When Sadat and Begin took the peace initiative in their hands, White House officials resentfully called them “unguided missiles.” Unguided by Carter and Moscow they certainly were, but they were guided most properly by their national interests and by a mutual desire to avoid war. Sadat extricated himself from the role of a stooge in Soviet tricks. Israel broke out of the unprecedented isolation in which Carter’s policy had placed her.

A separate peace treaty between Egypt and Israel could have been negotiated soon after Sadat’s flight to Israel, had it not been for Carter’s objection to such a treaty as incompatible with his demands for a “comprehensive peace.” Sadat wanted to “go to the end” in his negotiations with Israel, but how could he agree to anything less than Carter’s demands on Israel? Carter prejudiced the peace negotiations by imposing conditions to which Israel could not agree.

It was suggested that the reason for Carter’s negativism towards Sadat’s initiative could have been “not just injured pride but a desire to influence negotiations.” Sadat and Begin went out of their way to placate Carter, to praise him and thus to save his face. This is understandable, for they both need American guarantees, not against each other, but against the Soviet threat. They went as far as to attribute to Carter the credit for Sadat’s initiative. Carter, despite all the evidence to the contrary, did not hesitate to acknowledge it. An Egyptian official accused the Carter Administration of “schizophrenia” and said: “They are afraid of the Sadat initiative, but they want to control it. They are worried about not knowing what is coming next, but they want to claim credit for any success.

The Camp David accord in September 1978 was signed because Sadat and Begin wanted it desperately and not because Carter had guided them to that goal. Carter only prolonged the negotiations by demanding unacceptable

concessions from Israel which Sadat had no alternative but to support in order not to appear less pro-Arab than Carter on the Palestinian problem. But in spite of Carter, Sadat signed the accord because peace with Israel in the shadow of the Soviet threat was more important to him than a Palestinian "homeland or entity."

In December, 1978, the State Department made a confidential study that showed that Carter, during his first year in office, had devoted more time to foreign affairs than had Presidents Ford or Nixon. Carter during his 1976 campaign accused past administrations of "preoccupation" with foreign affairs and vowed to concentrate on domestic issues. His own "preoccupation" made a mockery of that vow. Of immediate interest is the striking fact that the Arab-Israeli conflict was by far Carter's major preoccupation. He revolutionized traditional American policy and pursued his schemes with remarkable inventiveness and stubbornness, despite his temporary tactical retreats and endless semantic modifications. He attempted to bring the Soviets into the peace talks, expecting that Israel or Egypt would accept Soviet "guarantees." It was a provocation of immeasurable magnitude. It also had betrayed his moral blindness: he accepted Soviet pretensions to the role of a champion of Palestinian rights. The Soviet record of monumental abuse of the legitimate rights of their own peoples of various ethnic, religious and historical identities flies in the face of such pretensions.

Although Carter claims credit for the Camp David accord, he actually does not intend to honor its letter or its spirit. The U.N. Security Council anti-Israeli Resolution of March 1, 1980, supported by the U.S., negated the Camp David accord. The uproar in this country and in Israel was followed by an unprecedented and bizarre development: Carter disavowed the American vote, and called it a "mistake" resulting from an "honest break in communication." Vance, testifying before the House Foreign Affairs Committee, ignored Carter's explanation and stated that the vote was in fact the true expression of the Administration's Middle East

policy but it had to be disavowed in order not to upset the current Israeli-Egyptian negotiations. The *New York Times* editorial advanced a reasonable surmise that Carter pursued two policies, one official, the other “hidden,” and that the hidden policy reflected Carter’s true intentions.

“Whom, then, are we to believe?” asked Rabbi Alexander Schindler, the President of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations. “Do we take Jimmy Carter’s word when he says that the U.S. should have abstained because it was ‘in violation of my policy’?” Carter refused to comply with the Congressional Resolution ‘asking him to provide details of internal communications prior to the U.N. vote. He claimed “executive privilege” and asserted that the airing of the demanded information would hurt his “search for peace in the Middle East.”

“As Norman Mailer says, only the unsayable is really worth saying.” Thus began the *New York Times* editorial of November 6, 1977, “The Jews and Jimmy Carter.” The editorial further stated::

one of the unsayable things in our political life these days is that most leaders of the American Jewish community are acting as if President Carter is risking Israel’s survival.

Another “unsayable” thing, according to the editorial, was:

the confrontation now brewing” between Carter and the Jews that “seems to us to transcend any single issue relating to the Middle East negotiations.... What is unspoken is the further fear of a revival of anti-Semitism and of the charge of ‘dual loyalty’.

The truth of the matter is, however, that all those things are quite sayable and openly discussed. What has been indeed unsayable so far and therefore worthwhile bringing up is a distinct possibility of Carter’s hidden anti-Jewish bias as the real motive and the real cause for the fear of a revival of anti-Semitism.

Why is Carter “burning angry” every time he has to deal with Israeli insubordination and, as Hamilton Jordan put it, has to break the “back of the Jewish lobby” in this country? New York Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan picked up strange and suggestive signals. He denounced the Carter Administration’s policy requiring New York City to assign public school teachers on the basis of race:

Such practices evoke one image in our lifetime above all others: the sorting out of human beings for the death camps of Hitler’s Germany. . . The Congress has not enacted Nuremberg laws, and the executive branch had better think again before enforcing them.. . Can it be that your Administration wants to tell black and Hispanic - Americans to line up in one queue? Jewish Americans to line up in another? If this is the policy of your Administration, Mr. President, you should so state, for it is now the practice.

One wonders whether the “sorting out of human beings” and Carter’s Middle East innovations have the same root.

“I’d rather commit suicide, political or otherwise, than hurt Israel,” said Carter to a group of Jewish members of Congress who visited him early in October 1977, shortly after the Soviet-American declaration was published. Press headlines announced that Carter’s statement was “strong,” and that it underscored Carter’s unwavering dedication to the support of Israel. The statement was strong indeed, in fact much too strong to be real, especially in view of Carter’s ever escalating hostility to Israel. If anything, it has all the earmarks of a strong reaction formation. It is worthwhile considering Ernest Jones’ important observation. He wrote that God-complex types, “vary according to the particular God with whom the person identifies himself,” and that in the West, the most common identification is with Christ. “With this Christ type there invariably goes an anti-Semitic tendency....”