

Sadat and Camp David Reappraised

Zahid Mahmood*

Introduction

High above a mountaintop in Maryland, a sleek helicopter circled over thick stands of oak, maple, and poplar, then slowly settled down toward a cluster of cottages and a landing pad. Anwar al-Sadat, the president of Egypt, had arrived, and Jimmy and Rosalynn Carter were waiting. It was the afternoon of 5 September 1978 at Camp David, the start of a summit meeting that would change the face of the Middle East.

According to Hasan al-Tuhamy, then and now a deputy prime minister and advisor to the president, the first full-dress meeting between the Egyptian and American delegations started “with a blow to our faces. Carter told us, ‘Here we shall start from the beginning and everything is negotiable.’ ” The Egyptians were enraged, for they had come to Camp David, they insist, only because they believed that the United States had agreed to support basic Egyptian positions.

Tuhamy says, “I told Carter and his group, ‘If you think you are coming here to negotiate every point from scratch, you are mistaken.’ ” Tuhamy claims he went on to say that any agreement under which Israel failed to return the Sinai or to evacuate the territories occupied in the 1967 War or

*Zahid Mahmood, a Pakistani, is a Ph.D. candidate in political science at Columbia University. This article is derived from a manuscript he has recently completed on the post-1967 diplomatic history of the Arab-Israeli conflict. The article is based on over two hundred hours of taped interviews conducted over a four-year period with political leaders, scholars, and journalists involved with the Middle East.

to allow for Palestinian self-determination would not be acceptable to Egypt or any Arab state. Such an agreement, he added, would not be fulfilled.

It was a prophetic exchange. Never again, during the course of the Camp David Summit, would the two full delegations meet. And the final agreements that emerged from the summit did indeed prove to be unacceptable to the Arab world.

Given the negative Arab response and the failure of the negotiations regarding the future of the Palestinians, it seemed likely that Camp David would fade from the world stage. The assassination of Sadat in September 1981 and the completion of the Israeli withdrawal from the Sinai six months later seemed to confirm that prospect. Then came the Israeli invasion of Lebanon in June 1982 which made the Palestinian problem more urgent and led President Reagan to offer his own peace proposals, which he said were his interpretation of those reached at Camp David. Since then, despite the so-called "cold peace," Israel and Egypt remain committed to the accords. Moreover, the February 1985 agreement between the PLO and King Hussein is said to contain some elements of Camp David. Given all this, it is essential at this stage to review the accords in light of how they were originally negotiated and interpreted.

This article will cover the discussions that took place between Cairo and Washington in early 1977 and the secret meetings between Sadat's special envoy, Hasan Tuhamy, and Moshe Dayan in the summer of the same year—meetings which convinced Sadat that he should go to Jerusalem. It will also cover the Jerusalem trip; Sadat's solo trip to Washington and Camp David in February 1978, where the Egyptian president demanded that President Carter devise an American peace plan and Carter agreed; and the Camp David peace conference, where Sadat, already plagued by fear of failure, was convinced to sign accords that were much less than what he sought. Sadat's experiences should be remembered and carefully analyzed, especially now, as the region witnesses new rounds of initiatives aimed at securing the elusive peace.

I

In January 1977, a new American administration came into office with some definite ideas about the future of the Arab-Israeli conflict. Several of its senior officials, like Zbigniew Brzezinski and William Quandt, had either been associated with, or directly involved in, the 1975 Brookings Institution report, "Towards Peace in the Middle East." In brief, the report had recommended a comprehensive approach to the Middle East conflict in

which Israel would withdraw to its 1967 borders, with minor, mutually agreed upon modifications, in return for formal peace treaties with each of its neighbors. The report also recommended self-determination for the Palestinians on the West Bank and Gaza, with the option of an independent state as long as Israel's security was guaranteed. Brzezinski, President Carter's national security advisor, recalls, "I believe we were all influenced by the Brookings report. At that stage we had no fixed view as to whether there should be a separate Palestinian state or some relationship with Jordan, but we did have the view that the Palestinians were entitled to a political homeland."

This American view was in its essence not much different from what the Arabs had agreed to as early as their October 1974 summit in Rabat. According to many Arab officials and intellectuals, the 1967 defeat had caused a profound change in Arab thinking; namely, there was an acceptance that Israel was a permanent reality in the region. The 1973 War had removed the stigma of defeat and enabled the Arab states to begin serious negotiations towards an "historical compromise" with Israel. At Rabat, they had agreed to coexist peacefully with Israel if Israel returned the territories occupied in the 1967 War. Crown Prince Hassan of Jordan recalls that it was primarily at Egypt's insistence that the PLO was named "the sole representative" of the Palestinian people, to whom would also fall the responsibility of negotiating the return of the West Bank and Gaza. The Arabs also agreed to a secret clause that named the West Bank and Gaza as the future Palestinian state, thereby implicitly recognizing the state of Israel.

Three years later, when Cyrus Vance paid his first visit to the Middle East as secretary of state, he found that the Arab consensus had held. "There was not any real difference among the Arab nations," he says, "on the 1967 borders in return for peace." The Carter administration, he adds, was also "thinking of withdrawal from the occupied territories with minor modifications, even though the final borders were to be negotiated between the parties." And in March 1977, the Arabs received further assurances of American sympathy for their position when President Carter publicly called for a Palestinian "homeland."

Upon taking office, Carter had indicated his receptivity to a reconvening of the Geneva Conference by the end of 1977. The first conference had been called to order three years earlier by the Soviet Union and the United States, following the October 1973 War, to seek a basis for peace in the Middle East. It had made little progress. Now the Americans and the Arabs were ready to return to the negotiating table.

But as the months passed, President Anwar al-Sadat became genuinely concerned that the second conference might also fail. There were some tactical differences among the Arabs, including Syria's insistence on veto power over any agreements reached. Furthermore, the Israelis were proving difficult. In May, Menachem Begin had been elected prime minister. He argued that United Nations Security Council Resolution 242, which called for an Israeli withdrawal from occupied territories in return for peace, did not necessarily apply to the West Bank and Gaza. Indeed, he insisted that those territories were an integral part of Israel.

Given these developments, Sadat became convinced that some preliminary contact with the Israelis was essential. According to Hasan Tuhamy, deputy prime minister and advisor to the president, Sadat was convinced that the Israelis would seek to create divisions among the Arabs and turn Geneva into a lengthy process in order to buy time to plant more settlements in the occupied territories, thereby making a return of the territories to Arab control impractical. Tuhamy recalls Sadat's vivid description of the Israeli attitude towards the territories: "Begin and his government are like the dog who has the bone between his teeth. They are living off it and it is not easy to deprive them of it. If I leave this bone in their teeth for a longer period, they will swallow it."

Sadat assigned Tuhamy to meet secretly in Morocco with Moshe Dayan, Israel's foreign minister at the time, to determine how far Israel would go toward returning the Arab territories. Tuhamy's account of the negotiations differs dramatically from that in Dayan's memoirs. According to Tuhamy, there were three meetings in 1977: the first on 15 July, the others at two-week intervals, in the presence of Morocco's King Hassan. There was little love lost between the two generals. "I had hoped to see him on the battlefield," Tuhamy says he told Dayan, "and that meant that I would have saved myself from this situation of meeting him in a political gathering."

After many "harsh confrontations," Tuhamy says he left the final meeting with good news for Sadat. The Israelis, Tuhamy told Sadat, had agreed to withdraw their forces from all the occupied territories in return for peace—a far cry from the version of the negotiations offered by Dayan, who said that nothing new of any substance had been decided.

Tuhamy's report, he says, "encouraged" Sadat to play for higher stakes. Soon thereafter, Sadat began thinking of meeting secretly with Begin to, in Tuhamy's words, "negotiate the principles of peace and its process." However, Tuhamy, a master of intrigue and secrecy since the early days of the revolution, advised Sadat against any such step but revived an idea that he (as the head of the Organization of Islamic States in the mid-1970s) had

toyed with, along with the late Prime Minister Bhutto of Pakistan, the late King Faysal of Saudi Arabia, and other Arab leaders. The idea was to gather three million Muslims from all over the Islamic world in Jordan and then begin a civil march on Arab Jerusalem in order to regain it from Israeli control.

In keeping with that idea, Tuhamy advised Sadat that if he truly wanted a big step, then,

Go to Jerusalem. Let us go to Jerusalem—our land, our holy place, center of the world and center of the problem . . . From there we will declare our demands and let the world hear and know in a last attempt for true peace. We shall see if they have the courage to go along with us in the same way.

Hence the idea of going to Jerusalem was planted in Sadat's head as early as September 1977, though Tuhamy is critical of the way Sadat carried it out because it ended in further dividing the Arabs.

Meanwhile, the American administration, like Sadat, was worried about the prospects for the Geneva Conference. Unaware of the Tuhamy-Dayan meetings, Washington sought to bring about its own meetings between Dayan and the Egyptian foreign minister at the time, Isma'il Fahmy. Says Fahmy,

I met Carter, Vance, Mondale, and Brzezinski in early October 1977 at the UN Plaza Hotel after they had met with Dayan. After we talked for a while, Carter said to me suddenly, "It would be my dream, Mr. Fahmy, if I could arrange a meeting between you and Dayan." I replied, "I am ready, Mr. President, to sit with Dayan anytime."

The man was shocked. He said, "But this is my dream. This is fantastic." He immediately began to work out the details, suggesting we meet the following weekend at Camp David.

Finally, I told him, "Okay, now that everything is arranged, I will be there this weekend, but accompanying me will be Yasir Arafat."

Carter said, "Oh, my God, this is impossible."

I said, "Why, Mr. President, if it is possible that I sit with Dayan, why is it not possible for him to sit with Arafat? After all, the problem that is the key is the Palestinian problem."

But Carter said, "This will be politically suicidal for me and is a nonstarter."

This episode has an added importance because it contains the essence of Arab objections to what transpired later, the sidelining of the Palestinian problem. As Fahmy noted sardonically when discussing the reasons for his resignation,

Look, if Sadat's trip was praised so much in the United States, if he is such a hero for what he did, then why did the Americans not advise their friend Begin to do the same at the time and go see Arafat in Beirut!

It seems that General Alexander Haig did advise Begin, but Begin instead sent Sharon to Beirut in a tank in June 1982.

In the third week of October, William Quandt, then a senior official with the National Security Council, was asked to draft what he describes as "a very personal letter" from President Carter to Sadat—a handwritten appeal asking the Egyptian president's help in breaking the Geneva deadlock. As Quandt remembers, "What we really wanted Sadat to say was, 'I am going to Geneva with no preconditions and whenever the Americans say so, I will be there.' "

We know from Tuhamy's account that as early as September, the idea of going to Jerusalem had been planted in Sadat's mind. So when Carter's letter arrived, Sadat was already considering telling Carter that he was planning a trip to Jerusalem. At this point, Fahmy put his foot down and told Sadat that such a trip would not only scuttle Geneva but that the Israelis would trap Sadat into making a separate peace if he went alone. When Sadat insisted, Fahmy made an alternative suggestion. He advised that if Sadat was determined to do something dramatic in Jerusalem, he should propose a summit meeting in that city to include the heads of state of the United States, the Soviet Union, Britain, France, China, Israel, and the involved Arab states—as well as Yasir Arafat. According to Quandt and other American officials, that is precisely what Sadat proposed in his reply to Jimmy Carter. Fahmy recalls that Carter wrote back saying something to the effect that, "Mr. President, this is a great idea but it will undermine all my efforts for Geneva."

Meanwhile, Sadat himself was having second thoughts. He sent Tuhamy to Peking to check out the Chinese reaction and was told upon Tuhamy's return that it would be impossible to get Hua Guo-Feng (at the time the chairman of the Chinese Communist party) into the same room as Leonid Brezhnev.

All of this left Sadat once more brooding over the prospects for success at Geneva. He turned again to thoughts of a solo journey to Jerusalem.

II

In many ways, the idea of going to Jerusalem reflected Sadat's overall strategy and fit in with his flamboyant personality. According to Tuhamy and Egyptian intellectuals and journalists like Muhammad Heikal, Muham-

mad Sid-Ahmad, Professors Sa'adeddin Ibrahim, and Alyeddin Hilal Dessouki, Sadat was not simply an Egyptian nationalist, as he has often been portrayed. In fact, their analyses attribute to him goals far more complex than is commonly assumed. Sadat's major foreign policy goal upon assuming office in September 1970, they say, was to settle the conflict with Israel and regain Egypt's leadership role in the Arab world. He was also determined to reorient and revive the Egyptian economy by opening it to Western investments and to further democratize Egyptian society. In many ways, Sadat gambled on the belief that he could accomplish all his other goals by ending the conflict with Israel.

To regain Egypt's preeminence in the Arab world (lost to the ascendant oil states) and to tap Western resources for his floundering economy, Sadat undertook to make Egypt what he called a "strategic partner" of the United States in the region. In return for American economic and military aid, as Professor Dessouki puts it, Sadat wanted to "compete with Israel over who could better serve American interests in the Middle East, Egypt or Israel." Sid-Ahmad adds, "Nasir gained the leadership of the region by being anti-Western; Sadat tried to do it by being Western."

Sadat realized that this partnership could win him new influence with the pro-Western Arab oil states. These states lacked the military and demographic resources to protect themselves from radical subversion or an outside invasion, but their people refused to accept a large American military presence in view of America's close relationship with Israel, as well as for other cultural and religious reasons. Once the partnership with Washington was in place, Sadat believed, Egypt could perform that role; then the pro-Western Arab oil states would open up their coffers, and Sadat would gain prestige in the Arab world as a whole.

However, Egyptian observers insist that before Sadat could openly ally himself with the United States, before he could sell such an alliance to the other Arab nations or even to his own people, he believed there had to be peace. With peace, Sadat's would-be partner (the U.S.) would no longer be supporting a nation at war with the Arab world. With peace, he would no longer be at odds with Israel, his would-be partner's special friend. He became convinced, his former aides say, that the road to leadership of the Arab world, the road to Washington, passed through Jerusalem.

It was an awesome task for a man who had never been taken seriously, even in his own country. Sadat had spent his entire adult life in Nasir's shadow. Even his long-time friend and sometime foreign minister, Ibrahim Kamil, says of Sadat, "He was not a very cultured or sophisticated man . . . a sincere man but superficially intellectual. He was full of contradictions.

He would have flashes of great ideas and then turn around and do something stupid." Above all, both Tuhamy and Kamil speak of him as "a simple man." Moreover, he suffered from inferiority complexes and desperately wanted to be a "hero."

Anwar Sadat was born and raised in a village and saw his role as the Egyptian president as that of a "father" heading one big family. As one Egyptian intellectual put it, "The great goal of a village boy in Egypt is to be the village headman. Sadat behaved like a village headman while president." His goal in going to Jerusalem was simple: as the "head" of Egypt and the leader of the most important Arab state, he would go straight to the "head" of Israel and offer peace and recognition. In return, he had no doubt that Begin would agree to the principle of "withdrawal for peace." Ibrahim Nafi', editor of *al-Ahram*, says, "He always had the concept in mind that the whole Arab-Israeli conflict could be settled in forty-eight hours if the will were there."

On the surface, Sadat's two days in Jerusalem were a demonstration of harmony. According to his aides, though, the relationship between the Egyptians and their hosts was strained. Tuhamy is bitter that the Israelis went back on the commitments Dayan had made in Morocco. As an example of what he calls "Israeli treachery," he recounted an incident aimed at unnerving the Egyptians. Just a few minutes before Sadat was to address the Knesset, "a member of Begin's inner cabinet" approached Tuhamy and told him,

We do not want peace with the Arabs and tell Sadat that. If you are coming here to ask us to evacuate the occupied land, we are not ready to evacuate, so do not waste your time and effort. I have been asked to tell you that the land we have occupied is ours and we shall stay on and it is not worth trying to convince us or anybody.

Tuhamy called the incident "psychological warfare," an effort to ruin Sadat's presentation, and Tuhamy says that he waited until leaving Jerusalem before telling Sadat about it.

According to Dr. Mustafa Khalil, the former Egyptian prime minister, Israeli intentions became clear when they submitted to Sadat the draft of a peace treaty between Egypt and Israel. In the draft, they offered to return all of the Sinai to Egyptian sovereignty in exchange for a separate peace—terms that had, in fact, been offered to Egypt time and again. Sadat rejected the Israeli offer, arguing that the Palestinian issue had to be resolved first. Khalil added that the Egyptians had come well-prepared for this particular

episode, because Egyptian intelligence had actually obtained a draft of the treaty before Sadat left for Jerusalem.

Alfred Atherton, former U.S. ambassador to Egypt, says the following about Sadat's initiative: "Sadat never really understood at the time that Mr. Begin had a totally different interpretation of UN resolution 242. Mr. Begin did not believe that the principle of withdrawal necessarily applied to the West Bank, Gaza, and the Golan Heights." Sadat, says Atherton, "clearly expected a grand return gesture" from Begin. Instead, as Sadat was to say later, "I gave him everything—peace, security, recognition. He gave me nothing."

Ibrahim Kamil, who was appointed Egypt's foreign minister after Fahmy resigned, analyzed the Jerusalem visit in these terms:

The Israelis had been stunned by Sadat's peace initiative. The timing was not right for them because they wanted more time to absorb the territories. However, because of international public opinion, they could not refuse Sadat's initiative outright. So they tried to drag us into little details, prolonged negotiations until the initiative faded and died. They tried first to isolate Egypt from the Arab world and then, once isolated, squeeze it into a separate peace.

On the plane back from Jerusalem, Tuhamy says, he told Sadat that he should refuse to deal any further with Begin until Israel publicly committed itself to total withdrawal from the occupied territories. He argued that such a tactic would mobilize world opinion on Egypt's behalf and create deep divisions within Israel, strengthening those Israelis who felt Begin had not adequately responded to Sadat's grand gesture. Indeed, Tuhamy discloses, he told Sadat of a conversation he had had at the airport with Yiga'el Yadin, the deputy prime minister. Tuhamy claims that Yadin told him, "If this man of Israel creates difficulties or problems for peace, I am ready to take over and continue the progress to peace with you." Replied Tuhamy, "I have heard from a third party that the Americans have the same idea." But Sadat, Tuhamy says, responded, "Begin in opposition is more dangerous than Begin in office."

III

Herman Eilts, U.S. ambassador to Egypt from 1973 to 1979, met with Sadat on the evening of his return. The president, Eilts recalls, "had mixed feelings. He was disappointed about what he felt was a failure on the part of the Israelis to respond adequately to this grand gesture." However, Eilts adds, Sadat took some comfort from the enthusiastic reception he had

received from Israeli citizens, which he hoped would soften Begin's stance. He also found members of Begin's inner circle, like Ezer Weizman, to be more flexible. And, Eilts says, Sadat expressed himself as "astonished" at the emotional welcome he received from the Egyptian people.

Sadat quickly tried to take advantage of his new international image. He called for a conference in Cairo. There, he said, the leaders of the United States, the Soviet Union, Israel, and the frontline Arab states—Jordan, Syria, and Lebanon, as well as the PLO—would agree on the principles governing the final settlement at Geneva. According to Dr. 'Ismat 'Abd al-Magid, the current foreign minister, Sadat was trying to corner Begin publicly and compel him to accept the principle of "total withdrawal for total peace."

Meanwhile, Sadat was also pleading with Carter to take advantage of the Jerusalem trip to bring Begin into line. He called upon the American president to rally the American public, especially the American Jewish community, to confront Begin and make him behave with more flexibility. Could it have worked? Says Zbigniew Brzezinski, "As to the president doing it, yes, he probably could have done it . . . but I don't think he was prepared to have a massive confrontation."

In fact, many Egyptian officials feel that Carter let Sadat down all along. The Cairo conference was a dismal failure. The Arab states and the PLO boycotted the conference, as did the Soviet Union. The Americans and the Israelis only sent ambassadorial level representatives. Today, though it is not publicly acknowledged, many Arab and American officials feel that the failure to support Sadat at the Cairo conference in December 1977 was a major blunder—and that Sadat's plan to force Begin's hand at the conference represented the best hope for a settlement at the time. What the Egyptians find galling is that some in the administration had become convinced by that time that Sadat had opted for a separate peace. Eilts confirms that Carter and some of those around him indeed believed this.

When the Israeli prime minister visited Sadat in Isma'iliyyah on Christmas Day, 1977, Begin once again offered a separate peace treaty. But this time, according to Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Butrus-Ghali, Begin presented his autonomy proposal for the West Bank and Gaza that would have given the local Palestinians responsibility for certain municipal services like education and sanitation but would have left Israel in control of such essentials as the water supply, security, and the land. Sadat called the proposals "a joke," says Butrus-Ghali, and rejected them. What Sadat wanted at Isma'iliyyah and all the way to Camp David, says Kamil, "was an agreement on the general principles governing a comprehensive solution:

withdrawal on all three fronts and self-determination for the Palestinians on the West Bank and Gaza. Begin did not give him a chance. Isma‘iliyyah was a failure.”

In Jerusalem, Cairo, and finally in Isma‘iliyyah, Sadat had failed to accomplish his goals. The range of choices was reduced to two: to admit failure, or to continue, hoping that the Americans would come through in the end. But admitting failure would have meant humiliation and political suicide. By February of 1978, Sadat was getting increasingly nervous and frustrated with Begin. He decided to turn to his friend in the White House for help. On 3 February, he arrived in Washington, calling upon Carter and the American people to “arbitrate” the conflict. The Sadat and Carter families were flown to Camp David where, over the next couple of days, a personal friendship was forged between the two men. According to William Quandt, the two presidents and their families spent a day and a half secluded at Camp David before their aides joined them.

After the first formal session, Carter summarized for the Egyptian and American aides what Sadat had told him earlier: the momentum for peace was slipping away; the hardliners in Egypt and the Arab world were gaining credibility. “Carter went on at some length,” Quandt says. “Sadat did not say a word. He sat there looking absolutely miserable. It was a wonderful performance.” Finally, Carter turned to Sadat and said, “Mr. President, what do you think we should do?” Sadat replied, “I just want to ask one question: will there be an American proposal?” “Yes,” answered Carter, “we cannot tell you when, but we will put forth our ideas at the appropriate time. We will talk to you about when and how to do it. We cannot tell you how it will be done, but we will do it.”

Kamil claims that the Egyptians left the meeting convinced the Americans would put forward a solid peace plan. The meeting was hailed as a success in Egypt. The Americans had not only promised to get directly involved in the peace process but had also publicly reasserted two Egyptian positions—that resolution 242 applied to all occupied territories, and that the Israeli settlements were illegal. The Egyptians believed that the “American plan” would clearly include these positions.

At this initial Camp David meeting, the Egyptians told the Americans privately that they would no longer negotiate directly with the Israelis—“Begin’s tedious lectures were beginning to take a physical toll on Sadat,” Kamil says. They won an American promise to find out once and for all the Israeli intentions toward the West Bank and Gaza. In return, the Americans asked the Egyptians to come up with their own plan to match Begin’s autonomy plan and thereby set the stage for the American proposal

expected by Sadat. "We were not happy with this," says Kamil of the American request, "and we told them: 'Look, we cannot negotiate for the Palestinians. All we want is a declaration of principles that in return for peace and security guarantees, Israel will withdraw from the West Bank and Gaza. Then we will let the other parties negotiate the details between themselves.' "

In the wake of the Camp David meeting, Alfred L. Atherton, Jr. was appointed special Middle East negotiator and assigned to travel among the three nations in pursuit of that declaration of principles. And, according to Quandt, the Carter administration launched "a public campaign in the United States against two Israeli positions that we thought to be counter-productive . . . one was the continuation of the settlement activity on the West Bank and Gaza. The second was to get Israel to acknowledge that 242 applied to all fronts. There was nothing distinctive or different about the West Bank and Gaza as opposed to the Sinai or the Golan. They were all occupied territories and if Israel got peace, she would have to leave the territories in return."

By July 1978, it was clear that neither the Atherton "shuttle" nor the public campaign within the United States had led Israel to change its stance. Then Sadat received a telephone call from Carter. According to Kamil, Carter wanted Sadat to send Kamil to meet with Dayan at Leeds Castle in England on 18 July. When Kamil reminded Sadat of his commitment not to meet with the Israelis, Sadat replied, "I promised Jimmy!"

As requested by the Americans in February, Kamil carried to Leeds an Egyptian alternative to Begin's autonomy plan. In return for formal peace treaties, Israel was asked to restore the status quo of June 1967—to return the Golan Heights to Syria; the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, to Jordan; and the Sinai and Gaza to Egypt. Says Kamil: "We told them, 'We will solve the Palestinian problem on our own, since it is an Arab problem. What you want are security guarantees. Fine, we will give you all the guarantees you want. Once the status quo is restored, Israel is out of the conflict, and we will deal with the Palestinian problem.' " Indeed, the Egyptian delegate, Usama al-Baz, argued his case so well that when he finished, Dayan commented, "I wish you were on our side."

When the Egyptians finished their presentation, Dayan responded, "There is no alternative but a territorial compromise," meaning, says Kamil, "that Israel would return parts of the occupied territories." Kamil looked at Cyrus Vance and said, "Now you see, Mr. Vance, I have nothing more to add to what I have already said. Territorial compromise is not

acceptable to us. We will not give up any part of our territories. We are simply asking that resolution 242 be implemented, and we will not accept anything contrary to that.”

The Leeds conference floundered. Sadat was “furious,” Kamil says, because he felt he had made major concessions. Now Sadat swore publicly that he would not meet with the Israelis anymore unless they agreed to a declaration of principles. Moreover, he issued an ultimatum: unless there was movement on the diplomatic front by October, the anniversary of the 1973 War, he would “reactivate” the situation.

Several months earlier, the Americans had begun to put together their own peace proposal, as they had promised Sadat they would do. Early in August 1978, dismayed by the breakdown of negotiations, Carter dispatched Cyrus Vance to Cairo and Jerusalem to deliver personal invitations to Sadat and Begin to a summit meeting at Camp David on 5 September. The message to Sadat, Vance recalls, was that the United States had decided to move beyond its role as mediator to become a “full partner” in the negotiations. The president was ready to risk his personal prestige and political future on efforts to find an equitable settlement.

Looking back on those times, Sadat’s aides insist that he went to Camp David convinced he had Jimmy Carter on his side. “Carter’s promise to Sadat,” says Tuhamy, “was this: ‘Do not worry. We guarantee the spirit and outcome.’ These promises were given to Sadat all along before Camp David, and that is why he went there. They promised to implement resolution 242.” And if Begin refused to go along, the Egyptians say, Sadat was certain that Carter would publicly endorse the Egyptian concept of a comprehensive peace.

On the afternoon of the second day of the summit, Carter, Begin, and Sadat met together for the first time. After Sadat presented Egypt’s proposals, Carter cut the session short in order to forestall an angry outburst from Begin. On the afternoon of the third day, Carter presided over a shouting match between the two men. Sadat had been enraged when Begin, though recognizing Egyptian sovereignty in the Sinai to the international border, began insisting that the Israeli settlements and air bases there were not to be dismantled. Sadat felt it was a retreat from an understanding reached a year earlier. That same evening, the Egyptian and the American delegations met in the fateful formal session described at the beginning of the article. Not only did Tuhamy complain; Kamil, too, wondered aloud whether the Americans had altered their interpretation of 242. Replied Carter, “The U.S. position continues to be the same.”

It would be unfair to American officials like Quandt, Atherton, Eilts, Brzezinski, and the like if one assumed they were not sincere in seeking a comprehensive settlement. Their original proposal devised for President Carter did envision a comprehensive agreement emerging from Camp David. However, given Begin's refusal to budge on key issues and given Carter's unwillingness to confront Begin, the Americans began to retreat and Carter coaxed Sadat into going along. Says Kamil,

I told the Americans every time we met—from Vance to Atherton to Carter—I told them: "Look, there is an Egyptian proposal and there is an Israeli proposal. When the American proposal comes, I don't want you to take some pieces from each of the two and make a salad and say this is the American proposal." I insisted that the American proposal should reflect American positions stated and registered at the UN and elsewhere. "I want you to say what you have been saying all along: that withdrawal means withdrawal from all the Arab territories, including East Jerusalem, except minor modifications on the West Bank. On the refugee question, you have been voting in the UN for twenty years that the refugees have the right to return or be compensated. So put it in your proposals. On the settlements, you have called them 'illegal' and should say so in your proposal." This is all I asked of the Americans. They promised to do it time after time. Of course, it was a promise never carried out, though I must admit they tried.

Realizing that the talks were going nowhere, on the sixth day of the conference the Americans introduced compromise proposals that eventually set negotiations in motion on two tracks. Carter personally tried to negotiate the principle of an Israeli-Egyptian peace treaty, while the three delegations sought an acceptable formula for the Palestinian question that would incorporate a five-year cooling-off period.

Given what the Egyptians perceived to be a retreat by Carter, Sadat scaled down his demands. But he insisted, his aides say, that at the end of any such cooling-off period, which was rapidly equated with Begin's autonomy plan, the Palestinians be given the right of self-determination. According to American officials, Begin responded by threatening that if he was pushed on the Palestinian question, he would simply pack up and leave. He had publicly stated his position: autonomy would apply only to the inhabitants and not the land, upon which Israeli settlements would continue to be built; there would be no Palestinian self-determination; Israel would claim sovereignty over the West Bank and Gaza after the five-year cooling-off period.

When the Egyptians continued to insist on including self-determination for the Palestinians in the final accords, Kamil says, the Israelis adopted

what he calls a “cunning tactic.” The Egyptians had gone to Camp David convinced that the return of the Sinai would be no problem. They wanted to get an agreement on the Palestinian question at Camp David. However, as the Egyptians grew more adamant about self-determination for the Palestinians, Begin began to insist that Israel would like to keep its air bases and settlements in the Sinai.

According to Kamil, in a meeting between Dayan and Sadat, Dayan began by telling the Egyptian president: “Here you are talking of Palestinian rights. That is not the problem. What cannot be solved is the dismantling of the Israeli settlements and air bases in the Sinai.” Sadat was shocked, for he had always taken the Sinai for granted. Dayan went on to tell Sadat, “The Israelis are not afraid of any Arab country except Egypt, which has the strongest army. The Israeli people or the Knesset will never agree to withdraw from the Sinai, for security reasons.” When Sadat countered that Begin had said he was willing to withdraw, Dayan reportedly replied that Begin could not deliver on this point.

After this meeting, says Kamil, the Israelis were in control. If Sadat had quit the summit, as he threatened to do, the failure of the conference would have been laid at his feet. And, says Kamil, “Sadat believed that with a mutilated Sinai he would look like a fool.” He argues that both Sadat and Carter fell into the Israeli trap and spent the remaining days of the summit on the Sinai issue, while the Palestinian question languished in the hands of their aides.

Kamil kept pleading with Sadat not to accept the agreements. “I told him that we had the upper hand . . . because we had our peace initiative and world opinion on our side.” On Saturday, a day before the conference adjourned, Kamil went to see Sadat to tell him he intended to resign because he felt Sadat had broken earlier promises made to him when he had agreed to become foreign minister. These promises were no separate deal and no selling out on the Palestinian question. Kamil told Sadat, “We should not sign these agreements because the other Arabs will not agree to them. However, you are the president and you know better, but I cannot go along with this.” Sadat responded, “Relax, we will get an agreement on the Palestinians later.” Kamil was unmoved: Sadat reluctantly accepted his resignation.

Kamil recalls that later that day, Sadat gathered the Egyptian delegation on his front porch to hear their comments on the agreements. When someone commented that if “the Palestinian right to self-determination had been clearly stated, we would be in a much better position,” Sadat answered, “No, Jimmy told me that our insistence on Palestinian self-

determination would lead to the collapse of the negotiations and would in turn cost him his chair, and he would be a one-term president.” Kamil shot back, “That silly man just to be president for eight years would throw away the Palestinian question.” Kamil recalls that later that day Sadat told his aides, [Kamil] “attacks Carter not realizing that he is my trump card.” Hasan Tuhamy, too, was deeply upset with the agreements, which he calls a “disaster.” Says Tuhamy: “The losers were two—Egypt and the United States. The winner was only one: though a temporary winner.”

Sadat’s aides were not the only ones with serious doubts about the accords. Many of the Americans present shared their doubts. Quandt revealed that at one point, some of the Americans quietly approached Sadat at their own initiative. They told him that he need not sign the agreements as they stood. He could say to the Arabs that he had refused to sign a deal that would have secured the return of the Sinai because he had been unable to obtain a suitable deal on the Palestinian issue and that he would continue negotiating until he did. According to Quandt, Sadat lost his temper and shouted back, “No, no, never! I cannot do that to my people.”

What finally emerged from Camp David was, in fact, two documents. One was the blueprint for an Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty, which called for an Israeli withdrawal from the Sinai, including the dismantling of the air bases, and—pending a vote in the Knesset—the settlements, in return for peace with Egypt. The second document envisioned a five-year period of autonomy for the Palestinians of the West Bank and Gaza. An administrative body, or authority, would be elected. And at the end of the first three years, negotiations would begin over the question of eventual sovereignty. But there was no mention of Palestinian self-determination, nor did Israel commit itself to eventual withdrawal. This second document was sufficiently vague to have inspired a dozen different interpretations.

How could Sadat have accepted an agreement on the Palestinians that, on the face of it, was so far from his own stated goals? The Americans and the Egyptians involved offer several explanations, ranging from Sadat’s personality to his frame of mind at the time, from the disparity in negotiating skills between the parties to the confidence that Sadat felt concerning unwritten American assurances made at the time of the accords.

“Begin was the best negotiator at Camp David,” says Quandt, for one reason: the Israeli prime minister actually controlled the territories. Moreover, he had received a resounding vote of confidence from the Knesset just prior to the summit. Sadat was alone and isolated, while Carter’s preelection popularity was at its lowest ebb. Says Quandt, “Unless Carter was willing to put heavy pressure on Begin, what could we do? And Carter was

not willing to do that. It is true that whenever we had the choice of going either to Begin or to Sadat to extract more concessions, we would go to Sadat, simply because he was easier." Quandt adds, "Sadat was not a happy man at Camp David and felt he had been squeezed to the bone. He did not come out of Camp David euphoric, optimistic, or hopeful. He came out of it very nervous."

Ambassador Eilts also argues that Sadat was "not at all happy" with the document concerning the Palestinians and was "very worried about it." Says Eilts, "He was very disappointed. He liked Jimmy Carter and had tremendous faith in what 'Jimmy' would do in his second term." The ambassador recounted a conversation with Sadat in which Sadat revealed that he had accepted the agreements on the personal pleading of Jimmy Carter. Says Eilts, "It was not Sadat who went to Jimmy Carter but Jimmy Carter who went to Sadat and said, 'Look, Mr. President, I need your help for domestic purposes.' With that kind of an appeal, Sadat often said to me, 'How could I turn down the president of the United States when he asked for my help for domestic reasons?' "

Some prominent Egyptians believe that Sadat's willingness to accept the Camp David formula can also be explained, in part, by the profound change in his personality that followed his trip to Jerusalem. Sadat, they say, was seduced by the lights and glamour of the West. Says his old friend, Ibrahim Kamil, "This was not the Sadat I knew. Sometimes success changes people. Moreover, the Western media spoiled him. The village boy from Upper Egypt was suddenly on the cover of every magazine. All this convinced him that he and his initiative could not fail and he could get over every obstacle. On top of that, he was surrounded by 'yes-men' giving him bad advice." Adds the prominent Egyptian lawyer and member of the opposition, Yahya al-Gamal, "Sadat felt he was a prophet with a message from God. He was not willing to listen to any criticism. Sadat lost touch with reality. His trip to Jerusalem had made the world his stage. Sadat was an adventurer to go to Jerusalem, but not courageous enough to admit failure."

In the view of Egyptian officials (seconded by many Americans), the key reason why Sadat accepted what he felt was an inadequate treatment of the Palestinian issue was because of verbal promises and assurances given to him by President Carter. First and foremost, they say, was the assurance that Begin would immediately halt further settlements in the West Bank and Gaza. "The president and I," says Cyrus Vance, "very clearly understood, and our notes so reflect, that there would be no settlements built beyond what already existed until the Palestinian authority was in place, and the settlement question would then be taken up with that authority." Says

William Quandt, "Carter had promised him the freeze on settlements, which was a positive thing. At least he could have told the Palestinians that the situation wouldn't get any worse."

The second major assurance Sadat received at Camp David was that despite the open-ended language in the Palestinian document, he was not to worry because at the end of the five-year period, Carter would be in his second term and therefore able to exercise unlimited pressure on Israel to ensure that an agreement acceptable to the Palestinians and the Arabs in general was reached. Indeed, even more importantly, Sadat was assured that the American interpretation of Camp David was no different from his own.

As for Sadat's interpretation of "autonomy" and the eventual outcome, he interpreted "autonomy" to mean that the Palestinian authority would have legislative powers and would control all aspects of government except for foreign affairs and defense. He also believed that at the end of the five-year period, the Palestinians would exercise their right to self-determination, deciding for themselves whether they wanted an independent state or some linkage with Jordan. What Sadat told King Hassan of Morocco on his way back from Camp David was even more specific. King Hassan disclosed that "he [Sadat] had received guarantees from President Carter that East Jerusalem would be returned to the Arabs and that the West Bank of the Jordan River and the Gaza Strip would eventually become independent." When asked whether Sadat had received firm, personal commitments from Carter, the king replied, "Affirmative, certainly." Sadat's interpretations are further supported by several senior American officials, including Jimmy Carter in his new book *The Blood of Abraham*.¹

There were two other promises that Carter made to Sadat. First, he assured Sadat that he would get Jordanian and Saudi backing for him. Second, Sadat was assured that immediately after Camp David, Carter would arrange a deal between Israel and Syria over the Golan Heights. As Sadat himself declared to the Egyptian Parliament on 2 October 1978, "What applies to the Sinai automatically applies to the Golan. I call on the authorities in Syria to take part in the negotiations for the withdrawal from the Golan." These two promises were important to Sadat because his whole strategy depended on getting an agreement acceptable to the other Arabs so he could regain the leadership of the Arab world. But by this time Sadat was losing touch with reality, and Carter was worried about the 1980 elections.

¹See review of *The Blood of Abraham* below in "Recent Books"—Ed.

IV

The day after Menachem Begin participated in the joyous signing of the Camp David agreements he told an audience in New York that he had agreed to a settlement freeze for only three months—and that even during those three months, settlements already in place would continue to be expanded. As Butrus-Ghali put it, “Camp David, as such, was difficult to sell to the Arabs. But Mr. Begin’s speech made it an empty shell.” Begin was as good as his word: even as he spoke in New York, Israeli bulldozers were at work expanding some of the older settlements.

Indeed, many American and Egyptian officials trace the undoing of Camp David to this episode. Ambassador Eilts calls the settlements issue a “disaster.” He feels that Carter, by not standing up to Begin, showed that he was “indeed weak and wishy-washy.” Says Alfred Atherton, “The settlements misunderstanding was the Achilles’ heel of Camp David.” According to Butrus-Ghali, the major Egyptian reservations on Camp David were “that the American partner was so weak and did not help us to implement the agreements.” He adds that it was primarily the weakness of President Carter which led to the settlements fiasco. He says that Sadat was very “disappointed” with Carter and later called him “a weak man, with a weak character.”

The battle over Camp David flared up again and again during the months of negotiation over the details of the peace treaty. Before the issues could be resolved, Carter had to pay personal visits to Cairo and Jerusalem in March 1979 and extract more concessions from Sadat, further isolating him both in the Arab world and in his own country. In order to bolster Sadat politically, Carter also appeared before the Egyptian Parliament and promised to find an equitable settlement to the Palestinian question that would be acceptable to the Arab world.

By this time, Sadat had gone too far to turn back. Having nowhere else to turn and not willing to admit failure, Sadat went all the way with Carter, hoping that Carter would reward him in his second term. Accordingly, the peace treaty was signed on 26 March 1979 on the White House lawn. For Sadat, it was the act that sealed his isolation in the Arab world. Egypt was suspended from the Arab League. In April, negotiations began over the shape Palestinian autonomy would take, but again the Egyptian and Israeli delegations were at loggerheads. By the summer of 1980, according to Butrus-Ghali, Sadat ordered his delegation back, convinced that the autonomy talks were getting nowhere. He was also outraged and humiliated by a resolution passed by the Israeli Knesset declaring East Jerusalem to be

a part of Israel. Once again, Jimmy Carter did nothing to confront Begin. Instead, in September, according to Butrus-Ghali, Carter called Sadat and requested that he renew the autonomy talks. Sadat agreed, mainly because he wanted to help Carter's image as a peacemaker two months before the American election.

The defeat of Jimmy Carter was shattering for Sadat for it deprived him of his "trump card." On 20 January 1981, Ronald Wilson Reagan was sworn in as the new president. The Begin government was euphoric, while there was a deep sense of gloom in the Arab world, especially in Egypt. Never before had there been a more pro-Israel president in the White House. Indeed, Reagan had said during the election campaign that he considered the Israeli settlements on the West Bank to be "legal" and believed that all of Jerusalem should be Israel's capital. As he saw it, Sadat's aides report, the new American president was far more interested in Soviet global machinations than in furthering the Camp David peace process. Meanwhile, Israel continued rapidly planting more settlements.

Indeed, the new administration downgraded the Middle East conflict to focus solely on the "Soviet threat." Accordingly, Israel was classified a "strategic asset," while Egypt was demoted in importance. Under Carter, Sadat had hoped to become America's strategic partner. What the Reagan administration wanted was a "strategic consensus" in the region, with Israel as the leading partner. Perhaps the most devastating development from the Egyptian and Arab point of view was the new American emphasis on "international terrorism" at the expense of human rights. At least while Carter promoted human rights, the Arabs could point to the Palestinians as a prime example of a people whose rights—including self-determination—had been violated and denied. Now, even that edge over Israel was lost.

Indeed, by all accounts, Sadat in his last days was not a happy man. Begin repeatedly humiliated him by annexing East Jerusalem, bombing Beirut in July, and running for reelection on a platform that claimed Israeli sovereignty over the West Bank, Gaza, and the Golan Heights. One particularly painful episode for Sadat began with a journey to meet Begin at Sharm al-Shaykh in June 1981. Forty-eight hours later, the Israelis bombed a nuclear reactor on the outskirts of Baghdad. The timing was very damaging for Sadat because it gave the Arabs the impression that Sadat had known about the Israeli action but had failed to warn the Iraqis.

Meanwhile, Sadat's problems at home were multiplying. Political and economic tensions in Egypt were rising. As Herman Eilts says, "Prosperity had not come with peace. This hurt Sadat badly." In fact, Egypt's defense budget increased, while the overall economy continued to deteriorate. The

Americans did send him a few million frozen chickens on an emergency basis and some used buses to ease Egypt's transportation problems. But these buses quickly deteriorated in the congested Cairo traffic from constant overloading and were in turn quickly renamed the "Voice of America" for their excessive noise and smoke. Sadat's critics also spoke about Egypt's increasing dependence on the U.S. They argued that Egypt's rightful place was to lead the Arab world; instead, Egypt had become vulnerable to foreign domination and economic penetration.

More importantly, Egyptians in growing numbers came to believe that their president had made a separate peace, which isolated them from the rest of the Arab world. Coupled with this was the feeling that Sadat had exchanged Palestinian rights and other Arab lands for the return of the Sinai. This is a crucial criticism. Even today it is widely assumed that the document on Palestine negotiated at Camp David was a "fig leaf" for Sadat to cover the separate peace. In fact, this "fig leaf" was a trap that Begin wanted Sadat to step into. Accepting the "fig leaf" meant something less than self-determination for the Palestinians, something unacceptable to the other Arabs. That would not only ensure the isolation of Egypt but also undermine the overall Arab negotiating position.

So it was a desperate Sadat who made his last journey to the United States in August 1981. According to Egyptian officials, he pleaded with Reagan to pursue the peace process more forcefully. He asked the Americans to rejuvenate the negotiations on the West Bank and Gaza by initiating direct talks with the PLO and to support Arab demands for Palestinian self-determination and an independent state. He was rebuffed.

Back in Cairo, Sadat faced a drumbeat of criticism. Opposition newspapers sharpened their attacks; Friday sermons in the mosques raged against the "separate peace"; police were called out to control public protests. By September 1981, Sadat had lost his nerve and cracked down on the dissidents in Egypt, jailing hundreds of people from all walks of life and thus alienating virtually every element of Egyptian society.

Prominent Egyptians like Hilmi Murad, a leading member of the opposition and one of those arrested at the time, argue that it was Begin who forced Sadat to crack down on the dissidents. They claim that Begin must have told Sadat the attacks on Camp David were a violation of the peace treaty, which prohibited hostile propaganda against one another. They say that Begin told Sadat the latter was conniving with the opposition by not stopping them and was preparing to rejoin the Arab ranks after the return of the Sinai in April 1982. Unless Sadat muzzled the opposition, they suspect, Begin threatened to delay the Sinai withdrawal. They

conclude that when Sadat returned empty-handed from the U.S. in August, he had no choice but to submit to Begin's will. The proof they offer is that (a) all those arrested were vehemently opposed to the separate peace, and (b) their imprisonment was to be for six months, i.e. until April 1982, when the Sinai was to be returned to Egypt in full.

Ultimately, it does not matter whether their theory is true or not. What is crucial is that many people in Egypt believed it. When Sadat at one point offered the Nile waters to Begin in return for a withdrawal from the West Bank, many Egyptians were outraged. They found this policy of appeasing Begin humiliating, especially since many within Israel who had opposed Camp David from the beginning—Sharon, Shamir, Yuval Ne'eman—were holding high offices.

All these factors culminated in Sadat's assassination at the hands of his own soldiers. Ironically, the assassination took place on 6 October, the day of Sadat's greatest glory when he was nicknamed the "Hero of the Crossing" (of the Suez Canal). It was also ironic that he was mourned mainly in the West. Indeed, Begin managed to isolate Sadat even in death. By insisting on attending his funeral, Begin kept the other Arab leaders—except Sudan's former President Numeiri—away. Crown Prince Hassan of Jordan aptly describes Sadat's assassination as "a combination of homicide and suicide."

There are many lessons to be drawn from Sadat's odyssey. The lessons relate to both Camp David and the current situation. First, as far as Camp David is concerned, it has been a complete disaster for the Arab world. There are several complex reasons.

Sadat's peace initiative could only have succeeded if he had been able to get the minimum that the other Arabs would accept. What the Americans and Sadat seemed to forget somewhere along the line was that while the other Arabs could not make war without Egypt, neither could Sadat make the peace he desired without the other Arabs.

Sadat and the Americans continued to tell the other Arabs that Camp David was a comprehensive peace process they should join. In response, the Arabs pointed to Israeli actions and contended that actions spoke louder than words. No one disagreed with Sadat's speech in the Knesset, nor did they disagree with the Egyptian and American interpretation of Camp David. What they wanted to see were results. For example, Herman Eilts, who also served as American ambassador to Saudi Arabia, says of the Saudi attitude, "The Saudis also want peace. It is absolute nonsense to describe the Saudis as anti-peace. . . . They just don't happen to like the terms set out in the second Camp David document. And Sadat was not happy about

that either.” He adds, “Frankly, the Saudis always said this to us: ‘Show us what you Americans tell us you are going to make out of Camp David and what Sadat says, and we will be the first ones to applaud it. But until you do, don’t expect us to endorse something that does not seem to be happening. The Israelis are taking steps with new settlements and with statements, all of which contradict what you Americans tell us is supposed to come out of this, and we don’t see you doing anything about it.’ ”

The other Arab states voiced similar concerns. Even the PLO’s official position agreed with what the Americans and Sadat saw resulting from Camp David—i.e. self-determination with the option of an independent state. Indeed, many of the prominent mayors on the West Bank and Gaza were even willing to accept autonomy as long as self-determination was guaranteed at the end. Both the late mayor of Hebron, Fahed al-Qawasmeh, and the currently exiled mayor of Halhul, Muhammad Milham, said so time and again and in separate interviews with this writer.

The Arabs told the Americans time and time again that they would discuss any security guarantees the Israelis wished as well as any procedural issues. What they find difficult even to contemplate is surrendering any part of the occupied territories. They become incensed when they are called “rejectionists” in the Western media. As the Syrian vice president, ‘Abd al-Halim Khaddam, says, “What we are simply rejecting is the continued occupation of our territories by Israel. We have never rejected peace.”

Zayd Rifa’i, the Jordanian prime minister, gives other reasons for the Arab anger with Sadat.

Most people supported the contents of Sadat’s speech in the Knesset. They were against his going to Jerusalem and the humiliation it implied. But when we heard what he said, we thought maybe this new style of diplomacy would work. But certainly, the majority of us were against Camp David simply because we realized it to be what it really was: a separate peace. Egypt was selling the Palestinian and Arab cause for the Sinai. Egypt, as the strongest and most populous Arab country, is needed by us here not only in war but in peace, in the negotiations. By throwing away all their cards, Sadat destroyed our position completely—militarily and diplomatically—from the negotiating point of view. It was, after all, Egypt that got the Arabs into this mess with Israel in the first place in 1967. Now, with Egypt out of the picture, the Israelis have no incentive to make peace with us or return our territories. Withdrawal from the Sinai has meant the annexation of the Golan and East Jerusalem. And if the Israelis have their way, it will mean the annexation of the West Bank and Gaza.

The Arab anger with Sadat is a reflection of an even deeper anger with the United States, which they feel let down not only Sadat but also its own

principles, as well as its Arab friends. The Arabs tell of their delight when Jimmy Carter committed his administration to a comprehensive peace in the Middle East. They feel that Carter betrayed them, and worse, he betrayed Sadat. They blame the United States for Sadat's isolation and for taking Egypt out of the Arab ranks. Indeed, many hold Carter and Begin responsible for Sadat's death by leading him down a path that isolated him not only from the world around him but ultimately from his own people.

During the years since Sadat's assassination, tensions in the Middle East have multiplied. Most are a direct result of Camp David; nevertheless, it seems the lessons of Camp David have not yet been learned.

The Egyptian-Israeli talks on Palestinian autonomy were destined to go nowhere, and they did. The war between Iraq and Iran created new divisions within the Arab world and has drained billions of dollars from the economies of the region. Arab disunity, exacerbated by Egypt's isolation, has made the Arab states individually vulnerable to foreign enemies. The Israeli invasion of Lebanon in June 1982 was another direct outcome of Camp David. Israel would not have dared to lay siege to an Arab capital had it not enjoyed the security of a separate peace treaty with Egypt. The tragedy in Lebanon gave Arab states and others new cause for anger at the United States and a new sense of their own helplessness.

Several peace plans have been put forward since the Israeli invasion of Lebanon. There is the Arab Fez Plan, the Reagan Plan, and the recent PLO-Jordanian peace initiative. All have been rejected outright by Israel. Indeed, all of them are destined to failure unless the proper lessons are derived from Camp David and unless the Americans are willing to confront Israel on the key issue of territory for peace.

The key lesson of Camp David for the Americans to ponder lies in what happened to Sadat. None of the promises made to him were kept. The Americans and the Israelis successfully isolated him from the Arab world and then deserted him. Now the same kind of demands are being made on King Hussein and Yasir Arafat—demands for unilateral concessions. Why should the Americans be trusted this time when they cannot get the Israelis to stop building settlements or even to agree to the principle of withdrawal for peace? Nor is it wise to seek separate deals between individual Arab states and Israel. Arab disunity creates more catastrophic results, as the Camp David example has shown.

The Palestinian issue has been deliberately made into an obstacle by the Americans and the Israelis. The Israelis use it to buy time, further absorbing the territories, while the Americans use it to justify their own inaction. If dealing with Yasir Arafat is such anathema to the Israelis and the

Americans, why did they not accept the Egyptian proposals at Leeds Castle? Indeed, why do they not simply say that if Israel returns the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, to Jordan, the Golan Heights to Syria, and the Gaza Strip to Egypt in exchange for peace treaties, the Arabs should deal with the Palestinian question themselves. Why continue to bicker over what are at best nonissues? Palestine is a reality and will remain one, whether or not the Americans and the Israelis accept it. What does have the makings of a catastrophe is the “no war, no peace” syndrome.

This constant bickering over resolution 242 is a subterfuge used to justify inaction. If it is just a matter of the PLO and its leader accepting the reality of Israel’s existence, then he has done so in ways that go far beyond the general principles laid out in UN Security Council Resolution 242. Arafat on several occasions has said that he accepts “all UN resolutions pertaining to Palestine.” The significance of this has been either accidentally overlooked or deliberately downplayed. By accepting all UN resolutions pertaining to Palestine, Arafat has for the first time also accepted the 1947 UN Partition Resolution, which called for the creation of a Jewish and a Palestinian state in Palestine. It was that resolution that made the creation of Israel possible and on which its legitimacy rests.

Now it is time the Americans and the Israelis fulfilled the promise made to the Palestinians in that same resolution, which they both championed. America’s shortsighted stand on the Palestinian question isolates it in the world community, including among its European allies, all of whom have endorsed self-determination for the Palestinians. The Americans and the Israelis must confront the Palestinian reality, as the Palestinians have done with Israel. The Palestinian problem is not one of terrorism but of a people disinherited, responding out of desperation. The late Sadat, for all his shortcomings, never failed to emphasize these points to his American friends, many of whom agree with him.

While it is true that resolving the Palestinian question will not bring absolute peace to the region, it would remove the primary contradiction that has alienated the Arab and Muslim worlds from the United States. The endless negotiating and no war, no peace syndrome create unnecessary tensions and false expectations. The current situation undermines American credibility in the region, and indeed, throughout the Arab and Islamic worlds. American inaction and unconditional support for Israel fan the flames of Islamic fundamentalism and lead to hostile resentment. Crown Prince Hassan of Jordan warns that “there is slowly coming about a virtual spiritual humiliation of the Arabs; a feeling of despondency; almost the feeling that even talking to the Americans is worthless, for there is no

middle ground to talk about.” He added that the oil states had shown moderation both in their economic and oil policies but “all of this in return for what? In return for continuing neglect of basic Arab rights, continuing references to the strength of the Israeli lobby in the United States and the fact that the U.S. leadership has constituents. We too have constituents. We too live in an area where people matter.”

The United States must draw lessons from the warnings of the Arab leaders that time is running out. The Americans should not take moderation for granted in the Arab world, or the friendship of its Arab allies.

The American government owes a moral debt in death to the man they honor so much—Anwar al-Sadat. By leaving unfulfilled the promises they made to him, they dishonored him in Egypt and throughout the Arab world. The Egyptians are ambivalent about their late president. In the words of an Egyptian taxi driver: “The Americans mourned our dead president while many Arabs rejoiced. We do not know how to react. We are confused. Did Sadat betray us and the Arabs, or did the Americans betray Sadat?” The answer to this question will determine Sadat’s place in Arab history and America’s credibility in the region for a long time to come.