

Behind Carter's Blunders: A Dangerous Strategy For Mideast War

Jimmy Carter's March 8 statement in support of Israel's right to "defensible borders," his March 9 unveiling of a multi-year "peace plan" along the lines suggested by a 1975 Brookings Institution report which calls for the stationing of Israeli defense forces on Arab territory; and his March 16 call for a "homeland" for the Palestinians, have all drawn extensive speculation in the United States and in the foreign press as to Administration intentions. The emerging consensus is aptly summed up by a Pentagon connected thinktank official in Washington: Carter has "unfortunately muddied the waters" with his "careless statements."

James Reston, writing in the *New York Times*, is more correct: Carter is "provoking both sides in the Middle East to take absolute and contradictory positions from which they cannot withdraw, thus forcing a confrontation too soon."

This is both the intention and emerging result of Mr. Carter's intervention into the Middle East arena. Within the ten days since Carter's first statement, positions of both the Israelis and the Palestinians have hardened into intransigence. In a not-unrelated development, Lebanese leftist leader Kamal Jumblatt, a proponent of peace in the Mideast, was machine-gunned down outside his headquarters March 16, a murder his son attributes to Israeli intelligence. In the last 48 hours, Lebanon has again veered toward bitter civil war, with 200 people now reported dead. Wider fighting in Lebanon and possible spill-overs of violence into Syria and other Arab states is now being widely predicted.

There can now be little doubt that Jimmy Carter and his ever-present mentor, National Security Council Chief Zbigniew Brzezinski, are driving for a Middle East war which will quickly become a U.S.-Soviet Union confrontation. Most immediately, Carter's seemingly incomprehensible flip-flops are aimed at keeping the Europeans out of the region. The European Economic Community, despite periodic lack of will, has maintained the momentum of the strategically vital European-Arab dialogue and the commitment to consider Mideast policy independent of Washington.

Whether Brzezinski's scheme will work is in large part dependent on the response of the Arab world. According to the script, the Arabs are expected to respond to Carter's destabilizing utterances with patterned anti-Israeli moves, unwinding a scenario similar to the 1967 Arab-Israeli war. But the Arabs instead may direct their ire against the Carter Administration, a possibility suggested by recent angry Egyptian and Palestinian denunciations of Carter. This may engender a

sophisticated break with Carter toward Europe and catalyze motion on the *monetary* front towards forming a New International Economic Order.

The Scenario for Israel

Ever since a secretive March 31, 1975 meeting of leading Wall Street policy-makers — including current Secretary of State Cyrus Vance and George Ball — the U.S. has been committed to architecting an "Israeli breakaway ally" military strike force that could be manipulated into launching a war "independent" of the U.S. To accomplish this, the cabal members have assessed, the U.S. would have to manufacture an *illusion* of pressuring and abandoning Israel in public, while through covert commitments and enormous military aid, bringing to bear the weight of U.S. imperial power behind an Israeli garrison state. An important ingredient of this process is the use by a U.S. President of the emotionally laden code words — "Palestinian homeland," "Israeli withdrawals," and so on.

George Ball has recently written the lead article for the Council of Foreign Relations' *Foreign Affairs* magazine entitled "How to Save Israel in Spite of Herself." Recommending that Carter hold the threat of a withdrawal of U.S. aid to Israel, if Israel doesn't comply with U.S. demands, Ball stresses that "it is not whether we should try to force an unpalatable peace on the Israeli people, but rather how much longer we should continue to pour assistance into Israel to support policies that impede progress toward peace." Ball calls upon Carter to "take the political heat from powerful and articulate pro-Israeli domestic groups" and "be prepared to accept abuse and blame from both sides."

Lehman Brothers partner Ball, author of *Diplomacy in a Crowded World*, knows that his statements intersect a devastating internal crisis in Israel that is acting against Premier Yitzhak Rabin and threatening to bring a military clique to state power. Fears of U.S. abandonment are the necessary ingredient to bring the warhawks into power.

Rabin and his Labour Party supporters have been under steady "Watergating" assault for the past three months, the most recent being a spurious scandal involving Rabin's wife. Rabin has come under mounting pressure from the supporters of the defeated nominee for Premier, war-mongering Defense Minister Shimon Peres, who have demanded an equal share in all appointments and policy making.

Beginning this week, the Rabin regime has been further undermined by a national wave of strikes, in

strategic industrial and bureaucratic sectors. Observers have characterized the strike wave the "worst in Israel's history," and Israeli papers over the past few days have warned that the country is descending toward "anarchy" and "national suicide" and is approaching the "edge of sanity." The government has come under severe attack for being "paralyzed" and adopting a "do-nothing" attitude.

Rabin's response to the situation has until now been as per program. He has warned that the U.S. and Israel are heading toward a "tough struggle." He has also made his most intransigent statements ever toward the Palestine Liberation Organization, charging in London that "the very existence of the PLO constitutes a mortal threat to the existence of Israel."

The Arab Reaction

The dangerous U.S.-Israeli interplay has had a noticeable effect on Arab leaders. At this week's meeting of the Palestine National Council, Egyptian President Sadat declared that the Arabs would "not cede one inch of land" to Israel, while top Syrian-connected PNC official Zihair Mohsen of the Saiqa commando group promised that the Palestinians would soon recommence "commando operations" against Israel. This latter statement was echoed by PLO head Yasser Arafat March 15, and reflected intense feeling at the PNC meeting that no concessions could be made toward Israel until a definite quid pro quo came from the Israeli side to previous Palestinian offers of moderation.

In and of themselves, these statements are not sufficient to reveal Arab states' strategic determinations. Angered by Carter's irresponsibility, Egyptian president Anwar Sadat summoned U.S. Ambassador Hermann Eilts to his office last weekend and, informed observers report, "raked him over the coals." On March 13, the government-controlled *Egyptian Gazette* newspaper said: "The Carter Administration knows that peace will not come in 1977, doesn't want it to come, and is making even greater efforts to ensure that there will be a fifth Arab-Israeli war." (See below.)

At the PNC meeting, official spokesmen derided Carter's "homeland" statement as "words, not action," and angrily demanded that the U.S. act to support Palestinian rights. Several Palestinian leaders were quick to blame "the forces of U.S. imperialism and Israel" for the Jumblatt murder and predicted a wave of assassinations and confessional fighting to come in its wake.

American policymakers are reportedly concerned that the anti-Carter sentiment could effect the outlook of the keystone Saudi Arabian leadership. One Midwestern banker recently returned from the Arab Gulf implied that Carter's "homeland" statement was made only to assuage Saudi sentiment in order to connive the reluctant Saudis into bailing out the International Monetary Fund.

The failure, however, to derail Euro-Arab dialogue talks and to shatter the cohesion of the PLO is a sharp thorn in Brzezinski's side.

Last weekend, Italian newspapers report, Italian Foreign Minister Arnaldo Forlani was summoned to Egypt and Syria by Arab leaders to act in the name of the

European Economic Community to expedite the Mideast peace process. After Forlani's return to Italy, Radio Cairo commented favorably on EEC moves to formulate a Mideast policy, and noted with satisfaction a call by British Foreign Minister David Owen, soon to travel to the Mideast, for the EEC to "play a bigger role" in determining Mideast politics. The ongoing status of EEC-Arab talks led Israeli Foreign Minister Yigal Allon, on the eve of West German Foreign Minister Genscher's arrival in Israel, to say that the EEC had "no role to play in the Mideast" and should "stay out of the Mideast situation." The West Germans were blamed for having introduced in January a pro-PLO clause into an EEC Mideast policy statement.

Preliminary readings from the PNC meeting indicate that the most significant tendency has been a tentative re-entry of the dissident Palestinian "rejection front" into the mainstream PLO. The Iraq-backed Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine for the first time ever this week supported the creation of a "mini-state" on the Israeli-occupied West Bank and Gaza territories instead of the old formula of a "democratic secular state" for all of historical Palestine. Leading PLO officials expressed confidence that the PFLP leadership would soon rejoin the PLO Executive Committee. This action would take the life out of many existing Rockefeller think tank scenarios for terrorism by "Palestinian extremists."

Corriere Della Sera on the Mideast

March 15 — The industrialized countries of Europe know that they must establish close ties with the countries of the other side of the Mediterranean on which they depend for energy supplies and which are becoming powerful world financial powers.

The Arabs are calling for a European Italy so that it would be able to carry out its geographical and historical task as intermediary between Europe and the Arabs. Any attempts to deal with North-South and the Mediterranean issues are predicated on the solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict.

Egyptian Gazette:

Carter Doesn't Want Peace

The following are excerpts from an editorial entitled "Carter For War" in the March 11 Egyptian Gazette:

A UPI cable of Sunday, February 20, from Washington, said that the Carter Administration believed that if Middle East peace doesn't come this year, "then 1978 could be the year of the fifth Arab-Israeli war." UPI's informants in Washington were obviously being diplomatic. They should have said that the Carter Administration knows that peace will not come in 1977, doesn't want it to come, and is making every effort to ensure that there will be a fifth Arab-Israeli war. Perhaps that will come in 1978, but the sooner, the better, as far as the Carter Administration is concerned.

What else can you conclude from Mr. Carter's last pronouncements on the Middle East issue following his talks with General Rabin, the Israeli Prime Minister?

Last Wednesday he told a news conference that Israel will probably have to withdraw from much of the land it invaded in 1967, but that a peace settlement will be a "long, tedious process" that must start with ensuring Israel's survival. Why it should be long and tedious, why it should start with ensuring Israel's survival, he did not say. Clearly, however, Mr. Carter isn't anxious to put over an image of "honest broker" in the Arab-Israeli dispute....

You can only wonder what is left for Presidents Sadat and Assad to discuss when — and if — they go to Washington. How Mr. Carter can have made up his mind on the Middle East issue, in the absence of any kind of

discussion with the Arab leaders, is surely astonishing. It is all the more so since the Vance "fact-finding" junket was his idea and he was the one to request talks with the Arab leaders and invite them to Washington. And even if his discussions with General Rabin have served to decide him on the issues involved, wouldn't it have been rather better for him to refrain from making such announcements until after the Arab leaders' visits? But, in a way, it serves the Arabs right. For them to have thought that the United States would show them even a fraction of the consideration...was plainly ridiculous. And to have believed that the U.S. would really fulfill its pledge to work for a just peace was ludicrous.

Turks Look To East For Relief From IMF

Last week, after issuing a statement praising Moscow and the importance of Turkish-Soviet relations, Turkish Foreign Minister Ihsan Sabri Caglayangil arrived in Moscow to discuss with Soviet officials Soviet financing of 20 industrial projects in Turkey involving \$7 billion in credits. Turkey is also considering construction of a large Black Sea refinery for the processing of Soviet oil from the Baku fields.

According to Radio Moscow, high level military contacts between the two countries are also being planned, with Soviet Chief of Staff General Nikolai Ogarkov slated to visit Turkey later this year, complementing a trip to Moscow last year by his Turkish counterpart General Semih Sancar.

Turkey's turn to the East is primarily propelled by its bitter battle with the International Monetary Fund. Turkish officials, led by Finance Minister Yilmaz Ergenekon, walked out of a meeting with an IMF delegation that arrived in Turkey on the eve of Caglayangil's departure to the Soviet Union. The IMF was demanding drastic import cutbacks. The IMF also made known its decision to cut credit to Turkey until after the elections, scheduled for October. The IMF, however, was forced to back down slightly and agreed to extend \$70 million to the Turks.

Turkey's trade deficit continues to grow, exacerbating its liquidity problems. To attract foreign cash, it has promised to up interest rates on convertible lira deposits made for longer than six months. According to one banker, nobody is taking the Turks up on their offer and whatever deposits are being made are still short-term. With only \$900 million in foreign currency reserves, the Turks are faced with paying back double that amount in convertible lira deposits as well as the \$3.1 billion deficit.

Clifford on the Watch

The Carter Administration has met Turkey's turn toward the Soviets and its insistence on a 7 percent growth rate with rather undisguised threats. Last week, the *New York Times* warned of "the ever-present threat of military intervention in Greece and Turkey" due to the "fragility" and "unviability" of democracy in both countries. Turkey is paralyzed as a result of right- and left-wing student clashes that have left at least 40 dead since

the start of the school year. Late last week, four political prisoners managed a spectacular escape from prison, leading to search and seal operations throughout the country and raising the spectre of martial law and military takeover.

According to the Turkish press, Carter's hand-picked envoy Clark Clifford, who just returned from a trip to Greece, Turkey, and Cyprus at Carter's behest, will shuttle back to the area next month, uninvited by local leaders. Clifford's first trip followed by days important steps by the Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot leaders toward a settlement. The second trip will intersect the convening of U.N.-sponsored peace talks beginning March 31 in Vienna. A March 13 *New York Times* editorial by C.L. Sulzberger attacked the Clifford mission as unnecessary and ill-timed, noting that it comes exactly as the region is on the verge of solving its difficulties on its own.

Last week, Turkey suddenly announced that it will soon send out the Sismik oil search ship into the disputed waters of the Aegean, opening the possibility of a replay of last year's Aegean crisis. Greek political observers charged that the Turkish decision to send out the Sismik again is directly linked to the Clifford mission. While in Ankara last month, Clifford openly "pressured" Prime Minister Suleyman Demirel to "make concessions" in Cyprus, putting Demirel in the politically embarrassing position of having to comply with U.S. dictates and running the risk of losing votes in the upcoming general elections. Turkey's decision to exercise its independence by sending out the Sismik and by announcing military maneuvers for next month has already led to increased tensions in the area, with the Greek government threatening to cut off Aegean peace talks with Turkey and the Greek armed forces being placed in a "state of readiness." Rizospastis, the newspaper of the Greek Communist Party (KKE), has exposed the destabilization as a "U.S.-NATO plot to revive Greek-Turkish tensions and complicate the situation around Cyprus, the Aegean, and the EEC." The Greek press links the increased tensions to Carter-Clifford statements earlier this year predicting an "expected new crisis in Greek-Turkish relations." Huseyin Bas of the Turkish daily *Cumhuriyet* attacked Carter for his "crisis management" foreign policy and