

dependent state.”

Although he did not say so directly, it was widely thought that Sadat's insistence on ignoring procedural obstacles to Geneva in favor of issues of substance meant he was willing, with Arab approval, to go to Geneva without the presence of the PLO. Israel has emphatically stated that it would not attend Geneva with the PLO present, and therefore, Sadat is seeking an Arab consensus for a “unified Arab delegation” at Geneva, with Palestinians included, to meet Israel's objections to the PLO.

President Carter and Secretary of State Vance both endorsed the Sadat statement as a potential breakthrough in Middle East peace talks. Carter said that he hoped that Syria, Jordan, and Lebanon would back up Sadat, and Vance said bluntly—almost echoing Sadat—that it would be “a tragedy if the remaining differences over procedures were to thwart the opportunity” that now exists for peace. Carter urged Arabs and Israelis not to “quibble” over procedures.

The question that remains to be decided at the Nov. 12 Arab Foreign Ministers' meeting is whether or not Syria and the PLO will agree to work with Egypt on this approach. A great deal of bitterness exists between Sadat and Syrian President Assad over regional issues, since Sadat, under Henry Kissinger's guidance, agreed to the 1975 Sinai Pact that isolated Assad and set into motion the bloody Lebanese civil war.

Some suspicion obviously remains. Only last week, Sadat was crusading *against* the Geneva conference, hinting darkly that Egypt did not feel that it could be convened, which won him the praise of Israel's advocates of a return to the step-by-step approach (including the *Jerusalem Post*; see below). If Sadat is lying this time, then it is widely suspected that Egypt might use the breakdown of a Geneva conference, and the resulting crisis, to slip back into a Kissinger-style format.

But the chief factor militating against that possibility is the reported insistence of the Saudi Arabians on an overall settlement. As reported below, there is virtual unanimity that under no circumstances would Saudi Arabia, who pays Sadat's bills, accept a return to step-by-step diplomacy.

Part of the reason for Sadat's apparent shift on Geneva comes from the dizzy pace of international contacts with Egypt. In the space of little more than a week before his speech, Sadat visited Romania, Iran, and Saudi Arabia; talked with Assad, Jordan's King Hussein, Saudi Oil Minister Zaki Yamani, Syrian Air Force Commander Naji Jamil, PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat, and other Arab leaders. Meanwhile his foreign minister met with Iraqi Foreign Minister Hammadi and set a date for a visit to Egypt by West German Chancellor Helmut Schmidt on Dec. 21. In addition, Egypt's chief of staff arrived in Romania on Nov. 8.

Sadat Speech Easing Israel to Geneva?

A European diplomat, knowledgeable in Middle East politics, had this assessment of Egyptian President Anwar Sadat's Nov. 9 national address.

My strong feeling is that Sadat worked out the statement beforehand with the PLO, the Syrians and the Jordanians. All three had representatives there when the speech was made and Sadat spoke to all of them before the speech was delivered. I also think Carter is supporting Sadat's ideas as contained in this speech, and that the Soviets, while strongly anti-Sadat personally, are supporting the posture Sadat assumed in the address. Both the U.S. and the Soviets concur with Sadat's expressed intention to get things going to Geneva as rapidly as possible.

Tactically, I think Sadat's game is to get the Israelis to make concessions, by putting out the line that the PLO as such won't be at Geneva. This is to get the Israelis toward the position of softening up on the actual content of the Palestinians at Geneva—basically to endorse in some fundamental way the PLO's ultimate right to have control over which Palestinians are at Geneva. So, we can assume that Sadat was throwing out a trial balloon, to ease up Israel's insistence on veto power on Palestinian representation at Geneva. If the PLO won't be at Geneva, they'll have a say in who will be there, and this will represent the contours of a general compromise. So it is hoped.

EXCLUSIVE

The Step-By-Step Conspiracy

Counting on the early collapse of chances for a Geneva Mideast peace conference, key policymakers in the U.S. centered around Henry Kissinger and their Israeli Labour Party counterparts—including Moshe Dayan, the ex-Laborite current Foreign Minister—are trying to force the Mideast situation back on a track toward a separate Egypt-Israel deal modeled on Kissinger's 1975 Sinai Pact.”

The central operation of this policy-intelligence nexus was the escalation in southern Lebanon this week. Israeli planes carried out the most extensive bombardment in Lebanon in two years, killing or wounding over 100 people, in retaliation for a series of shellings of Israel

border towns by the so-called “rejection front” of the Palestinian movement. Since the “rejection front” is heavily penetrated by agents of Dayan, this week's Lebanon events clearly bear the marks of Kissinger's attempts to knock Geneva off track and forcefully reintroduce a step-by-step orientation.

Tactically, such a policy course necessitates direct threats at Syria, which is insisting on an Arab hardline on PLO participation at Geneva. Significantly, Israeli Chief of Staff Mordechai Gur blamed the Palestinian bombing of Israel on *Syria*. Gur's Israeli allies want Syria to back off from opposition to a separate Egypt-Israeli deal.

Before and after the Lebanon escalation, a host of

Israelis have pushed the step-by-step line. Most important, Dayan on Nov. 9 told an Israeli audience that Egypt was Israel's only "worthwhile interlocutor" in peace talks, and that a deal with Syria "of whatever kind" was out of the question. According to the Nov. 10 *Le Figaro* of France, Dayan was clearly referring to "a new Sinai Pact."

In the U.S. this week for a visit that included meetings with Vice-President Mondale, National Security head Brzezinski, and Secretary of State Vance, ex-Defense Minister Shimon Peres declared to reporters Nov. 10 that "at the earliest" Geneva would have "a fair chance" to reconvene "in the first part of 1978." According to the *Washington Post*, Peres identified Syria as the "core of the procedural problem," and raised the possibility of "having a conference with an 'empty chair' for Syria."

On Nov. 7, in a speech before the British Zionist Federation carried by the Jerusalem Domestic Service, former Israeli Foreign Minister Abba Eban called for a "return to a step-by-step approach" in the Mideast.

On the U.S. side, the escalation to sabotage Geneva was signalled by Kissinger's manipulative speech on "Jewish survival" before the World Jewish Congress Nov. 3. (See U.S. Report) At that time, Kissinger attacked the fundamentals of the Carter Administration's Geneva diplomacy. It was hardly surprising that the next day's *Washington Post* editorialized that "a respectable case can be made that the time is not yet ripe (for Geneva) and that the proper course is to pick up the Kissinger step-by-step approach in search of new and strictly limited disengagements."

According to John C. Campbell, Mideast policy adviser for the Council on Foreign Relations in New York, if an "Arab schism" occurs in the next days and a "real breakdown on the Arab side" develops, with "an inclination on Egypt's part to go back to separate accords," the U.S. "would welcome this — if the Saudis backed it. But," Campbell concluded, "we don't want to alienate the Saudis."

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Jerusalem Post: 'To Geneva And Back'

The following is the lead editorial of the Jerusalem Post's Sunday, Nov. 8 edition.

THE URGENCY accorded by President Carter and Prof. Brzezinski to the convening of the Geneva Conference before the end of this year and the declared strategy of aiming for a full peace agreement between Israel and the Arab confrontation states has been based

to no little degree on Arab warnings that the alternative to Geneva would be another war.

The trauma of having to face another Middle East war is further heightened for the Americans and their European and Japanese allies by the implied warnings that such a war would be accompanied by an economically catastrophic Arab oil boycott.

The danger inherent in this gamble of going for broke on the Geneva card is that these blustering threats which are part of a war of nerves may well turn into an unavoidable self-fulfilling prophecy. Even Arab leaders who are realistically reluctant to engage in another Middle East war in which their countries may suffer vast destruction due to Israel's military superiority, may find it politically impossible to back down if an when Geneva fails to live up to the unrealistically high expectations which have been attacked to it.

The possibility of such a tragedy is not so far-fetched, for even the most enthusiastic American proponents of a Geneva peace conference admit that the chances of its success are highly questionable. The argument adduced for going to Geneva, despite these patent dangers, is that not going there would be even more fraught with peril for Middle East stability and for the flow of Arab oil to the West.

Israel's recognition of the dangers inherent in an approach to reach a full and overall peace agreement to the intractable Arab-Israel dispute has been given expression in its undisguised preference for alternatives to Geneva. Foreign Minister Dayan reiterated this preference in his speech last week at Ben-Gurion University at which he suggested that the alternative to a failure to achieve full peace at Geneva need not be war, but a return to a quest for partial agreements.

There was some indication at the outset of Secretary of State Vance's tour of the Middle East in August that Egypt too would prefer such an approach. But President Sadat's agreement to proximity talks to prepare the way for Geneva was nipped in the bud by the opposition of President Assad of Syria and the Saudis.

Anwar Sadat's renewed attempt to revert to what would seem to be a revival of the proximity talks idea and his warning against rushing into an ill-prepared Geneva conference is a welcome return to a sense of realism.

The key to developments in the Middle East continued to lie in the hands of the Saudis and although Sadat was speaking to Egyptian journalists on a flight from Saudi Arabia to Cairo, it is as yet not clear whether he was also speaking for Riyadh.

Nevertheless, the impasse in regard to Arab attitudes to the Carter-Dayan working paper, and Mr. Dayan's and President Sadat's trial balloons of last week, would seem to provide a welcome opportunity for an American reassessment of its strategy for achieving peace in the Middle East.