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Egypt and Sadat, 1981.

Egypt After Sadat Daniel Jeremy Silver November 15, 1981

Among the interesting questions which face any historian is how much weight to give the actions and the policies of any individual leader. Does what any man does truly affect the course of history? When Anwar Sadat made his bold visit to Jerusalem he seemed to prove the popular idea that the actions of individuals can and do have great and grave consequences - that he had in fact changed the course of history. He had broken the wall of silence and non-recognition which had been erected by the Arab states. He had spoken to the Kenesset. He had begun negotiations. Presumably, the path of peace was opened and he had opened it. The question before us is whether this is a proper evaluation of what happened. Was going to Jerusalem an idiosyncratic act by a man of great courage which profoundly changed the course of history or an act of a careful and shrewd political figure who was responding to the perceived needs of his nation. In the later case another leader might not have gone to Jerusalem but he would have worked to the same end in his own way. If Sadat's actions were, in fact, idiosyncratic, then their consequences will probably die with 'him,' but if his actions corresponded to Egypt's needs their daring need not blind us to the probability that his successor will follow along.

It's always been my contention that Sadat acted in order to achieve what I would call the peace dividend rather than peace itself, that he was acting as a national leader; consequently, that the same concerns, although in a way appropriate to changed circumstances, will be reflected in the actions of his successor.

It's interesting in this regard that when we examine the Biblical tradition we discover that it discourages us from ascribing too much significance to the acts of individuals. "Put not your trust in princes." "Let not the wealthy man rejoice in his wealth." "Let not the wise man rejoice in his wisdom." "Let not the strong man rejoice in his strength." "Let him who would rejoice in this that he knows and understands Me." The Biblical tradition insists on the point that the acts

of individuals do not determine the management of history. It is God who determines the course of events -God and not man.

If we look at the most recent and widely popular theory of history, the Marxist one, we again discover a determination to declare the action of men as of little consequence. No man can stay the unfolding of the mass society and the emergence of the dictatorship of the proletariat. Some acts can hasten or delay the inevitable but the dialectic of history will unfold. Marxist historians believe that the policies of individuals are reflexes of the economic interests of their class and so fit in neatly to the dialectic which they posit.

When we look into our own souls we find that most of us take a somewhat different view and assume that individual acts can effect unexpected change.
We believe in the power of individuals over events, but we're not sure how much power
they actually have. Whenever men or women place themselves before us for election to
office, they tell us they seek office in order to put into effect some program we
presumably share with them. The very fact that they come before us and ask for our
votes suggests that if they get too far out of phase with us, with our interests, we
will not vote for them the next time. Moreover, it's been shown again and again that
if the entrenched administrators of the society are unsympathetic to a particular
program, no leader, whatever his power, can really make it effective.

In our very complex and integrated society it is simply not true that any one man, however powerful, can markedly change the course of history - unless, of course, he pushes the little red button. Of course, if we were all wise, all humble, all unselfish, and all committed to all the good values we could achieve a gracious and stable peaceful society. But we are not and never will be.

I'm not a determinist. I do believe that in small ways individuals can affect history. I believe that class and economic realities are not the only realities which must be considered by historians. But I also believe that the

West tends to ascribe too much consequence to individual acts and tends not to consider seriously enough the causes and motivation for the act which was taken. When we do we often discover - as I believe was true in Sadat's case - that what seems to be an act of great courage is that that its impact depends largely on its ability to catalyse a whole series of events which are in line with pressures and interests which have been roiling just below the surface.

Sadat simply hastened what would probably happen anyway. He uncorks the bottle. He opens for his people a way to effectively express their perceived needs.

Anwar Sadat won the Nobel Prize for Peace. He is considered throughout the West and in large segments of the Jewish community to be a martyr to the cause of peace. I mean in no way to derogate his courage or his flair for the dramatic. when I suggest that Sadat was not a crusader for peace but a convinced Egyptian patriot who set out on the "peace" road because of the dividends it promised his people.

Consequently I find myself ill-at-ease with the reactions of many of our community to the assassination. I was told that during Yom Kippur services a lady complained throughout my sermon that I was dealing with the Yom Kippur theme rather than giving a eulogy for Sadat. In a number of congregations Sadat's name was included in the Kaddish list. In some religious schools children were encouraged to write little pious epitaphs praising Sadat's quality. Need I remind you that just eight years ago Anwar Sadat launched a war to destroy the State of Israel and that there are hundreds of homes in Israel which house those who were widowed and orphaned by that war. Sadat was a soldier, not a saint. Sadat was not a Ghandi but a Bismarck - a complex political figure whose understanding of Egypt's national interests at one point in time led him to appreciate the value of negotiations and whose flair for the dramatic act enabled him to achieve these negotiations. His policies happened to coincide with some desperate hopes held by us and many began to see him as something far more than he was and I suspect, he began to see himself these last years. Sadat was not a visionary but an able and imaginative

politician who was able, because of his mastery of the moment, to put Israel into a position where Begin had to agree to more concessions than he might have agreed to if the negotiations had been approached in a more conventional manner.

How did Sadat come to the cause of peace? By losing Egypt's fourth war against Israel. In 1973 despite a lightning surprise attack and despite inflicting heavy casualties, Sadat was not able to defeat Israel. At the war's close Israel again occupied the East Bank of the Suez Canal and all of the Sinai. Shortly after that war Sadat threw the Russians out of Egypt despite the fact that they were supplying his army and training his officers in the use of sophisticated equipment. He did so because Soviet personnel were also subverting the interest of the mercantile middle classes and many whom Sadat represented by scheming with Egypt's masses and radicals for the revolution. Sadat feared another Nasserite bid for power. Having thrown out the Russians Sadat found himself with an obsolescent military machine, a partially trained officer corps and a bankrupt economy. His Egypt needed a fresh infusion of capital and since the Eastern Bloc sources were closed to him the only place he could turn was to the West. Moreover, Sadat had a new enemy on his Western front - the Libyan strongman, Khadafy - who seemed to be developing a plan to surround Egypt and its satellite, the Sudan, by moving into Uganda and Chad and mobilizing the radical forces in Eritreia and Ethiopia.

These realities led Sadat and his party to recognize that they needed to find a way to make Egypt attractive to Western investment and to in Western governments, particularly in the United States, a new source of cheap and large-scale rearmament. The only way to gain these ends led through Jerusalem.

An arrangement with Israel would endear Egypt to Washington and it had the practical advantage of allowing Egypt to move its forces from East to West. So Jerusalem and, a year and a half later, Camp David. It was a policy that succeeded admirably. The Israelis had what they had always said they wanted - an Arab state that would negotiate with them, and Begin found himself boxed into a position

in which he had few options but to give back all of the Sinai in stages in return for uncertain future promises. Egypt's benefits were much more tangible. Egypt gained the tolls of the Suez Canal, the land mass and natural resources of the Sinai, oil, And the gratitude of the military-industrial establishments of Europe and America. Here was a consumation the West had devotedly hoped for.

Investments began to pour into Egypt. New plants were established. The United States took up where Russia had left off. In 1976 Egypt received less than 300 million dollars a year in aid from the United States. Last year she received over 2½ billion dollars in military aid alone. The peace dividend was and is real, and insofar as the peace dividend has not yet fully been realized - there is still the third and final movement of Israeli forces from the Sinai scheduled for April of next year - you can be sure Hosni Mubarak will continue the so-called peace policies of his predecessor. Mubarak represents the same groups within the Egyptian political scheme as Sadat.

In this sense Egypt after Sadat is exactly as Egypt was under Sadat.

The only "peace" change which will take place, and it would have taken place if
Sadat had continued in power, is that having regained the Sinai Egypti
will turn to other programs of more immediate national benefit. Israel's further
concerns - the West Bank, East Jerusalem, open borders - are not Egyptian issues.

Come April Egypt will move toward policies which promise further dividends and those
include regaining markets and political ties with the rest of the Arab world. The only
"peace dividend" which will stand most to Israel's benefit is the continuing Libyan
threat. It's a real threat. We have 8,000 American men and military maneuvers in
the western desert in Egypt right at this moment because of that threat. And as
long as it exists, I think Israel can be fairly confident that the Egyptians will
not contemplate military actions on the Eastern front and will risk danger on the
fronts.

Anyone in the seat of power in Cairo, once April has come and gone and

the final Sinai withdrawal has been completed, would begin to move away from the issues which led to Camp David and try and put Egypt back into step with the more "moderate" Arab states. Sadat would have done the same. Egypt's need is to bring Arab banking, commerce and investment into its Egyptian economy and to find Arab markets for its exports. Egypt needs and wants to rebuild its military and the way here is through Washington and Riyadin, The major concern of Paret will no longer be her relationship with Begin and Israel - these dividends will have been harded ested, and it's likely that those elements of the Camp David agreement which require Egypt to adopt an open-door to Israeli travel and goods will not be implemented - certainly not generously. Egypt has little to gain by doing so. Egypt knows that no Western country will be exercised if she drags her feet on these issues and Israel's West Bank problem, will provide all the excuse necessary for their lack of reaction.

lim but not Arab country, proud of its past and, rece educationally and culturally than any other country in the Middle East except Israel. She is a poor country despite her ability to export 400,000 to 600,000 barrels of oil a day and the tolls of the Suez Canal. Egypt is a country the size of Texas and New Mixico but an importer of food stuffs because only about 6% of the land is arable Egypt is a country of 41 million, growing at the rate of 1 million a year. Her problems are economic and basic.

Egypt has the largest number of college graduates in the Middle East, about 16% of college-age youth are enrolled; but Egypt cannot provide employment for those graduates, and 2½ million Egyptians work elsewhere, mostly in the Arab world. The remittance of their wages is a major source of revenue. In Egypt inflation is running between 25% and 30% a year, and the distance between the haves and the have-nots has been widening each year. Sadat's major failure was that he did little to improve the lot of the have-nots. Sadat represented the interests of the educated upper classes and the world should not have been surprised, but was:

that there was little display of public grief after the assassination. When Nasser died Egyptians poured out into the streets and remained in the streets for the forty days of mourning. When Sadat died they went on to their dinner parties.

A poignant cartoon appeared recently in the Jerusalem Post which showed a man, an Israeli, sitting in front of a television set. The announcer is saying, "80,000 people have come to Anwar Sadat's Square to praise Egypt's fallen leader." In the next block you see the viewer talking to himself: "I knew the Egyptians wouldn't remain silent forever." In the next block the television picks up again: "The event was organized in Tel Aviv by Avi Natan." The Egyptians knew Sadat as an elitist who had markedly helped them with their immediate problems.

Sadat's attitude was not unlike Mr. Reagan's - a studied commitment to the economically disproved theory of trickle-down economics. Trickle-down economics is in bad repute in the United States, and it should be; and it's in bad repute in Egypt, and it should be. Not enough trickles down from the hands of the greedy. Sadat had a palatial home in his native village where his father had been a sizeable landlord and another in Cairo which has some of the world's worst slums. He failed to help the poor and the uneducated and underemployed classes of Egypt who could not advance in the society and consequently turned more and more to either radical economic or radical Islamic ideologies.

veils. He called them walking tents. But many Egyptians mocked Jehan Sadat, his wife, who seems so attractive to us in the West. She's a graduate of the University with a master's degree in library sciences. She is dressed well by British and French couturieres. She talks easily and gracefully. But to many of the men in the Arab world Jehan represents the greatest threat possible - the end of male supremacy, the violation of the God-ordained, Koran-mandated maleness of their world. Sadat was not able to raise the standard of living of the bottom two-thirds of Egypt, and among those people there was understandable anger and frustration and it was to those people that the more radical ideologies appealed and continued to appeal: Nassarism, Communism, the Muslim Brotherhoods who are committed to eliminate any and all adjustments between Islam and western ideas. Sadat was a devout Muslim but he did not

maintain a medieval way of life and ultimately died at the hands of those determined to reimpose the medieval way upon the whole society.

Mubarak will seek to build on the benefits Sadat gained, and if he is wise he will work harder to raise the standard of living of his countrymen and to share wealth somewhat more equitably. To a certain degree he will have to achieve this against the entrenched desires of the class which he supposedly represents. Perhaps his best option is to attract investment from the oil-rich countries who have every reason to want to see a strong Egypt aligned with their own purposes. Only through such investment can he create jobs and maintain the food subsidies. If I were Menachem Begin I would not expect a great deal from Hosni Mubarak, but then in 1982 I would not expect a great deal from Anwar Sadat. The best Israel can hope is that Egypt will become coldly, but non-belligerently, distant. At this moment Egypt has little reason to seek a military confrontation with Israel, but, equally, Egypt has little reason to open up her borders to Israeli goods or align the two countries' pro-Western defense policies. In a sense those who say that there must be a larger context than Camp David for peace in the Middle East are correct. They are saying it for the wrong reasons and offer unacceptable arrangements, but they are nevertheless correct. If Israel is to have any kind of security Jordan, Syria, Lebanon and the other confrontation states must somehow be brought into the "peace" process. Mr. Begin has few chips left. He gave a great deal to Sadat, more, I believe, than he should have. All he can really manage now is to delay Israel's removal from the rest of Sinai until he has found a way to tie that removal with some West Bank arrangement in which local Palestinians and Jordanians Achieve and I accept some version of autonomy. Once Sinai is again theirs, Egypt will wash her hands of the so-called autonomy issue. Egypt does not need to face the issues of the West Bank. Sadat and Mubarak have long made it clear that the West Bank must have autonomy, that Jerusalem must be the capital of an Arab community, and that we (Egypt) will begin the process, but that the Palestinians must work out their own purposes.' Egypt wants to distance itself from this thorny and difficult

issue. They have nothing to gain from being involved. Israel doesn't have that luxury, so the necessity of keeping Egypt concerned with the process.

In the long run the radicalization of Egypt due to its economic instability would pose great danger for Israel. The real question in the Middle East is whether Egypt, Saudi Arabia and the Gulf states can remain as they are, so-called moderate states, that is, nations run by people who represent the investing classes, or whether they will ultimately become radicalized and represent the passion of the poor who form the majority of their population in which case they will align themselves with Eastern Bloc and it will be difficult, indeed, for Israel to survive.

I can't paint for you a pretty picture this morning. As far as Israel is concerned, Egypt after Sadat is no better or no worse than Egypt with Sadat. There is one small benefit. Expectations have been lowered. There is no longer a saint on the scene, and no one sees Begin and Mubarak embracing and suddenly making everything right. The future is full of danger, compounded by the fact that most of the governments of the West are becoming impatient. In their eyes Israel has become the problem. Everyone accords Israel the right to survive - words - but everybody wants oil and markets and nobody wants to be bogged down the niceties of Israel's security problems One of the most fascinating and frightening moments of the last weeks involved King Hussein's visit to the State Department. He was to hold a press conference and some American official put a map on the wall of the room where he was to speak which listed every state in the Middle East except Israel. When this was noticed by a reporter, the press attache played dumb. He didn't know where it had come from. I know where it had come from and so do you. It had come out of the sensitivity of some State Department officer to King Hussein's unwillingness to recognize the State of Israel. If our State Department is so concerned with the sensitivities of a small Arab kinglet, imagine the degree of IN THE SAMO QUARTONS concern being directed to Israel's survival problems in this kin What kind of real understanding can Israel expect?

a people formed by its faith, a people forming its faith from age to age, from the day of bitter torment to the day of freedom.

Know this people:

This people Israel lives to tell God's praise, woman's hope, man's dream, and the redemption of our children.

Rabbi Shmelhe and his brother once asked their teacher, the Maggid of Mezerich, to explain the words of the Mishnah: 'One must bless God for the evil in the same way that one blessed God for the good.'
The Maggid replied: 'Go to the House of Study, and there you will find Rabbi Zusya; he will explain these words to you.'

MEDITATION

When the two brothers placed their question before Rabbi Zusya, he laughed and said: 'I am surprised that the Maggid sent you to me. You must go elsewhere; make your inquiry of someone who has suffered tribulations. As for me, I have experienced nothing but good all my days.'

But the brothers knew full well that from his earliest hour to the present, he had endured the most grievous sorrows. Thereupon they understood the meaning of the words of the Mishnah - and why the Maggid had sent them to Rabbi Zusya.

Lord, we are not so arrogant as to pretend that the trial of our lives does not reveal our flaws. We know ourselves, in this moment of prayer, to have failed ourselves and others, the ones we love and the stranger, again and again. We know how often we did not bring to the surface of our lives the hidden goodness within. Where we have achieved, 0 Lord, we are proud of ourselves and grateful to You; where we have failed, we ask forgiveness. Remember how exposed we are to the chances and terrors of life. We were afraid. We sometimes chose to fail.

MEDITATION

'When you pray, know before whom you stand.'

In prayer there is the danger of relying on the word, of depending upon the text, of forgetting that the word is a challenge to the soul rather than a substitute for the outburst of the heart. ... Prayer as a way of speaking is a way that leads nowhere. The text must never be more important than inner devotion, kavanah. The life of prayer depends not so much upon loyalty to custom as upon inner participation; not so much upon the length as upon the depth of the service.

Those who run precipitately through the liturgy, rushing in and out of the prayer texts, as if the task were to cover a maximum of space in a minimum of time, will derive little from worship. To be able to pray is to know how to stand still and to dwell upon a word. This is how some worshipers of the past would act: 'They would repeat the same word many times, because they loved and cherished it so much that they could not part from it.'

There is a classical principle in regard to prayer: Better is a little with inner devotion than much without it.

* *

3

At this hour Israel stands before its God; in our prayer, in our hope, in our dream, we are one with all Jews on earth.

This people Israel which You have formed still lives to tell of Your praise.

Today we say to one another:
See this sublime design
revealed at the very beginning
and realized from age to age.
See this people, few in number,
to the world unknown,
declare at the beginning
what will be until the end,
foresee its flowering
before the seed was planted;
see it choose the mission which chooses it
in the way it has foretold; see this people.

This people which You have formed still lives to tell of Your praise.

To our friends we say: See this people, exiled twice and twice surviving. See this people,

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