

is showing some signs of flexibility. Instead of saying, "We'll never talk to the PLO," now he's saying, "We won't talk to them unless they do this and this and this," which is an improvement. What he actually says is not as important as the general tone of what he says. If both sides are serious about a settlement, all these problems would go away. There are dozens of scenarios for solving

the Palestinian question, and each one is better or worse than another, but the problem is: How do we get even that far? It's like we have four maps of Los Angeles, each one somewhat different—but we're in Washington. The problem is to get to Los Angeles.

* * *

Support From Europe For A Comprehensive Settlement

France, according to several newspapers in that country, is devoting much energy to promoting a comprehensive and equitable peace in the Mideast among the Western European nations — nations whose exports will play a vital role in developing the Mideast region.

The Mideast was reportedly the premier issue when French President Giscard met with British Prime Minister Callaghan last week. Britain has deviously been pushing for a separate Egyptian-Israeli peace (see the Economist excerpts), and Giscard surely tried to change that attitude during the summit. After the meeting, the French president admitted that he had not been successful, stating: "There is... a convergence of attitudes between the two countries with respect to the perspectives for peace in the Middle East."

Le Figaro, "Behind the Scenes in Cairo" by a special correspondent, Dec. 14:

Four questions can be asked among many others. What is Monsignor Monterisi, the Pope's special envoy, doing in Cairo? Certainly, Pope Paul VI has always been interested in this part of the world and "wishes that peace reign in the Middle East, the cradle of Christ where millions of Christians live," but that is not sufficient to explain such an initiative. In fact, Monterisi could well have in his cassock pockets a peace plan for Jerusalem, the capital of the three monotheistic religions. But, on the other hand, his presence in the corridors of the conference could well be an indirect form of pressure on Syria, an Arab country with a very strong Christian minority which Assad (the Syrian president —ed.) himself a member of the minority Alawite community, cannot ignore.

The second question which intrigues all observers: what, in fact, is Egyptian vice-president Mubarak doing in France? No one can believe for an instant that the number two man of Egypt can spend five days abroad in this period just to visit nuclear power sites (as interesting as they may be). In reality, the number two man, who has already played a role in the Israeli-Arab negotiations during certain trips (which were secret, especially the one in Morocco), is in France before going to Rabat once more to see what Europe could offer in the realm of political and military guarantees for the two parties concerned. Moreover didn't d'Estaing evoke this question in his meeting with James Callaghan in London?

Third question: why did Moroccan King Hassan II who, let us repeat, has been the mainspring of certain things in the theatre of the Mideast, send three personal emissaries into the Arab world just recently? Abderrahim Bouabid, leader of the Moroccan left and now a firm supporter of the government, will go to the two most serious hardliners of the rejection front — Iraq and Libya. Abdelhadi Boutalib will travel to Saudi Arabia, Jordan and Tunisia, and Ahmed Bensouda will go to Syria, Kuwait and the Emirates. Most likely, Sadat is counting on the influence of Cyrus Vance in Riyadh, Damascus, and Amman but also thinks that an Arab will know how to be even more convincing with certain countries.

Finally, the last question: why was an English journalist assassinated last week as he was just leaving Cairo airport? It is already well known that this poor fellow had recognized in his plane an "important" Palestinian personality who should not have "logically" been en route to Cairo...

In brief, we are all going to assist at the official opening of the conference while asking especially... what is happening elsewhere.

Le Figaro, "The Three Hypotheses," by Paul Marie de la Gorce, Dec. 14:

The moment has come when we will know whether the Jerusalem meeting between Sadat and Begin will be a prelude to peace or not.

In reality, everything goes back to three principal hypotheses. The most optimistic would be hope that Egypt and Israel agree, in principle, on everything: the Sinai would be evacuated and a Palestinian entity would be created. The pessimistic hypothesis is that of failure: no agreement would be possible on Palestinian rights, and President Sadat would not accept arrangements limited to other subjects of the negotiation. An intermediary hypothesis would hope that, for want of an immediate solution to the West Bank, a partial and separate accord on Israeli withdrawal from the Egyptian territory occupied since 1967 is accepted, even if it is only temporary. In any case, one can say that a failure would signify without a doubt a new confrontation, and that a separate and limited accord, without putting an end to the Israeli-Arab conflict, would be compounded with the inter-Arab conflict. It is within a short period of time that the new deeds must intervene to give probability to the

most optimistic hypothesis.

Egyptian President Sadat had this to say on the role of France at his Dec. 10 press conference transmitted by the French radio station Europe 1:

France has played a pioneer role in Western Europe; she was the first country to have understood that our cause is just and she has developed a very objective attitude. You know perhaps that I have close, friendly relations with President Giscard d'Estaing... What I demand is that France not remain aloof from the solution to the problem of the Middle East and assume its role as guarantor in the final peace solution that we understand now. I am very happy to know that my dear friend President Giscard d'Estaing is ready for that.

The Economist, "Bilateral Track" (editorial), Dec. 10:

(Sadat's diplomatic break with Syria, Iraq, Algeria, Libya and South Yemen) raises anew the question of whether Egypt's president is trying, as he says he is, for a comprehensive peace settlement or for the far easier target of a bilateral Israeli-Egyptian peace...

The temptation for Egypt to think of itself first and last is all too plain and all too understandable: an Egyptian-Israeli deal looks possible; a comprehensive one does not.

Long before Mr. Sadat dazzled Israel with his friendliness, Israelis had accepted that they could not indefinitely hold on to Sinai. They may niggle about Sharm el Sheikh and haggle about oil, but the elements of a deal are there. This is not true of a deal with Syria or Jordan, let alone with the Palestine Liberation Organization which has now knotted itself into the absurd tangle of announcing that it will accept the West Bank-Gaza state but will not, in the process, negotiate with, or recognize, Israel. Envoys from the West Bank are in Damascus questioning the PLO on this contradiction.

Short of another miracle, it is impractical to speak of an early Arab-Israeli peace; on the other hand, it has now suddenly become possible to speak of an early Egyptian-Israeli peace.

How can the Egyptians be held back from a peace which they desperately need and which they have earned with their blood? It is hardly for a British newspaper to look an Egyptian in the eye and speak of justice for the Palestinians. But without a solution that offers, at least, a measure of what Palestinians reckon to be justice, the poison of the 30-year conflict will go bubbling on - and could boil over in unpredictable ways and places, including Cairo. No Egyptian-Israeli goodwill can neutralize that.

President Sadat's great moral courage in going to Jerusalem is being dissipated by his own, and by others', impatience. It can be argued that Egypt's longer-term interest lies in waiting for the others to catch up before it signs, seals or delivers a final peace treaty.

But, if Egypt is to wait, the others, including the Palestinians, must hurry. At present they are stalking off in the opposite direction. Saudi Arabia is trying to turn them round again. Mr. Begin in London politely told outsiders that they should keep out and shut up. On the contrary: anybody with any influence on any of the governments or organizations concerned should use it to

try to gather them together again and to salvage the fading hope of a general move towards an Arab-Israeli peace.

France, Europe Offer Helping Hand For Mideast Peace

On Dec. 14 French President Giscard d'Estaing went on national television to present France's foreign policy, particularly in regard to the Middle East. Excerpts of those remarks follow:

The interest of all Middle East countries is peace. That is my conviction. French policy, contrary to what has been written, is not dictated by consideration of interests, even less by oil interests. (This is so—ed.) for a very simple reason, which is that we buy our oil at the international price, and if there were a crisis and an embargo, no country could protect itself alone. We saw that very well during the events of the fall of 1973. In reality, the international and European oil market is one and the same: thus, the idea that we would seek advantages either in price or supplies through our Middle East policy is totally unfounded. I think that peace is the objective. And in order for that peace to exist, it can only be a global peace, or there will be no peace in the Middle East. There will be a more or less limited disengagement in part of the Middle East. This is what Mr. Sadat says.

A global peace must be acceptable to all the parties concerned; that is on the one hand, by all the Arab countries concerned and, on the other hand, by Israel. To be acceptable overall, it must be a just peace. That is, a peace under which everyone finds an answer to their fundamental preoccupations. We have never deviated from that line. Thus it is striking to see that, when President Sadat goes much further in those theses than we do, he is applauded... This is a problem which involves certain rights:

There is the right of the Arab countries to recover the occupied territories. Why? Because the 1967 war was not a war of territorial annexation, it was a defensive war. Therefore, there are no moral or juridical elements which justify depriving the Arab countries of the recovery of their territories. The second element is the right for the Palestinians to exist and to exist under the modern form of existence, which means that the population must be organized, represented, and granted a certain number of administrative means for participation in the life of our times. The third important element is the right of the Israeli people to live in security.

In President Sadat's visit there is, in my opinion, a partial answer to this last question because...he has shown that a state of relations is conceivable which would not simply be relations of precautions between hostile countries, but a certain relation of cohabitation....

(In response to a journalist's question—ed.) You say that we were shy at the time of President Sadat's visit to Jerusalem. We weren't shy; we simply did not express ourselves against it...In the debate, France can express an opinion on the questions under consideration, but she