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## A CONVENIENT CASE OF AMNESIA

WHAT Warren Christopher, the American secretary of state, knows about Jewish history, or even about the part played by the Golan Heights in that history, has not been revealed. What he himself has made known is the impression made on him on February 24, 1993, by his first visit to the Golan, a few weeks after the inauguration of the Clinton administration. Whatever briefing he had received, he was manifestly not prepared for the Golan panorama spread out beneath his helicopter.

He knew that it was Washington's fixed policy for many years to get Israel to surrender this territory. But he came down from his helicopter all flustered, and exclaimed to the reporters on the ground: "There is no question that the geography complicated the matter and changes the situation very greatly." (The Jerusalem Post, February 25, 1993). Christopher went back to Washington.

He presumably expressed his doubts about the wisdom of American policy and, if consummated, its manifest threat to Israel's security. He was no doubt straightened out; where geography conflicts with American policy, geography must be revised accordingly. Never since has there been any abatement of Warren Christopher's efforts to bring about the surrender of Israel's Golan to Hafez Assad's Syria.

A more disturbing phenomenon is the geographical revisionist posture of Abba Eban, formerly Israel's foreign minister. No address so eloquent, even so passionate, has ever been heard at the UN as Eban's speech, immediately after the Six Day War, describing the atmosphere of doom that hung over the Jewish people as Israel waited for the threatened attack. In that speech, Eban brought home to his listeners the annihilatory purpose of the aggressors - laid out in declaration after declaration by the Arab leaders.

Not the least among those quoted by Eban was Hafez Assad, then Syria's minister of defense, who had said: "We shall never call for, nor accept peace. We shall only accept war and the restoration of the usurped land. We have resolved to ... throw you into the sea for good ... " Three years later, Eban demonstrated that he had learned the unconditional imperative dictated by the unfriendly geography of June 4, 1967. He made what became a justifiably famous statement to a team of German journalists (Der Spiegel No. 5, 1969): "We have openly said that the map will never again be the same as on June 4, 1967.

For us, this is a matter of security and of principles. The June map is for us equivalent to insecurity and danger. I do not exaggerate when I say that it has for us something of a memory of Auschwitz.

"We shudder," Eban went on, "when we think of what would have awaited us in the circumstances of June 1967, if we had been defeated; with Syrians on the mountain and we in the valley, with the Jordanian army in sight of the sea, with the Egyptians who hold our throat in their hands in Gaza. This is a situation which will never be repeated in history." EBAN DID not then add - how could he, he would have had to have his head examined - that of course, if some decent-sounding Arabs, like for example Assad, promise faithfully that they will "give" Israel peace if we but go back to the 1949 Armistice line, and put our trust in Arab friendship and goodwill, Israel shall gladly

withdraw from the Golan and the other "occupied territories." This, however, is the essence of the message that Eban is now blandly spreading around for a "deal" with Assad. He even feels no need to explain how he has discovered such a benign transformation in Assad's mind, how the Golan's geography has changed, or how the sense of Auschwitz has expunged itself from his memory.

The personality most significantly afflicted with this geographic amnesia is obviously Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin. Just three years ago, on June 10, 1992, he addressed a meeting at Katzrin, the Golan city, on the 25th anniversary of the capture of the Golan. Rabin recalled nostalgically, from his own military experience on the Golan, how that victory had "removed the nightmare" from the villages of Galilee - removed it, he said "forever, forever." Never again, he declared, "will these villages be under the Syrian guns." He recalled the cease-fire agreement with Syria in 1975, under which Damascus remained within the sights of the forward positions of the IDF and which "gave you 17 years of personal security." He went on to speak with emotion of the establishment on the Golan of 32 settlements, including Katzrin, for which he forecast a great future as one of Israel's important cities.

He insisted that the Golan should be given preferred status for investment. Then he made the statement which has resounded throughout the world: "It is inconceivable that even in peacetime we should go down from the Golan. Whoever thinks of such a possibility is forsaking the security of Israel." That clear pledge, which was also a plank in the Labor Party's platform, almost certainly won Rabin the 1992 Knesset election.

When did Golan geography stop bothering him? Rabin himself gave a revealing answer. At a social gathering in Washington, New York Times columnist William Safire criticized Rabin for his readiness to give up the Golan. His answer was: "It was [then president George] Bush that proposed it." Safire, reporting in his column, added: "And he [Rabin] thinks that makes it a good thing!"