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### Beware of Washington

Twelve years ago then Foreign Minister Abba Eban said in Jerusalem: “We shall not yield to outside pressures, even if we are denied certain essential supplies. We can manage with our own resources, military and other, for a considerable time”.

Sanctions? With the Labour Party in power?

What could Eban and his colleagues have done to provoke an innocent and benevolent world? There was indeed no immediate reason; but as a matter of public education, he was envisaging a situation in which this country would reject international dictation to withdraw to lines that Israel’s democratically elected government regarded as dangerous to the country’s security.

“Sanctions” were in fact to come to pass, in brutal and cruel fashion, four years later. After the first days of the Egyptian-Syrian aggression in 1973, Israel was universally perceived to be tottering on the brink of national disaster. The friendly governments of Europe with one accord denied Israel even the minimal assistance of allowing US planes carrying urgent supplies to land and refuel in their territory.

For all they knew, the punishment they thus meted out to Israel might have been crucial. Portugal alone, committed by a treaty with the US, responded to Washington’s request, to host those planes.

When Israel had recovered from initial setbacks and was on the verge of a stunning victory, the US joined hands with Egypt’s Soviet patron and secretly agreed to coerce Israel into a posture of defeat. The Israel Government was threatened subsequently with the sanction of abandonment by the US. To top it all, after the war, US Secretary of State Henry Kissinger made it plain that he regarded the Arab aggression as excusable.

The friendship of the European governments was thus demonstrated seven years before their Venice Declaration, whose ideas, if followed, would bring about Israel’s dissolution, and eight years before the Reagan Administration’s sanctions against Israel.

In 1973, Israel was not governed by Begin and the Likud, but by the Labour Party, whose leaders know perfectly well that the bullying of Israel has been continuous ever since. It is rank, self-serving dishonesty for them to encourage US and European politicians to pretend in 1981 that inimical policies towards Israel are somehow the fault of Menachem Begin personally.

It is an incontrovertible fact that Israel’s prime minister is blessed with a style that makes him appear unbending even when he is engaged in the most far-reaching and dangerous concessions. It was he, after all, who offered Egypt all of Sinai; who signed the disastrous Camp David Accords — an Arab-American document with a few Israeli amendments; who signed a peace treaty with Egypt containing a clause legitimizing future Egyptian war against Israel.

The personal style of the prime minister is a convenient excuse for hostility to his people. In the current onslaught on Begin over the Golan Law, its opponents pointedly ignore the fact that for years there has been an overwhelming public demand for the annexation. Some 750,000 citizens signed a petition to this effect, and something like three-quarters of the legislature favour it.

But the style of one prime minister or another is utterly irrelevant to the central facts with which Israel, and indeed the Jewish people, are being confronted by the Western nations. The European attitudes codified in the Venice Declaration of June 1980, and the evolving policy of the US, as it emerges unblushingly in Washington's words and deeds, are all definable as a substantive accommodation to the Arab purpose.

That purpose is being articulated most clearly by Saudi Arabia. United States policy towards Israel, no less than that of the European government is, in essence, being dictated by Saudi Arabia.

This has long been clear. It was dramatized painfully in the Senate debate on the AWACS and enhanced F-15 package deal. The debate will surely be remembered as a shameful episode in American history.

To illustrate the essential continuity in Washington's policy of strengthening Saudi Arabia against Israel, it is necessary to recall only that in 1978 the Carter Administration pretended that the new airbase at Tabuk, near the Israeli border at Eilat was an inoffensive civilian airfield.

When this was exposed as a fabrication, the administration claimed that it was intended to protect the oilfields — at the other extreme of Saudi Arabia.

To enforce its policy, the US administration has now, for the second time, "punished" Israel. Earlier this year it withheld F-15 and F-16 planes — duly paid for by Israel in cash and in security concessions — because Israel had dared to destroy Iraq's atomic reactor; and had dared to attack the PLO headquarters in Beirut, sited characteristically in a residential complex. From those headquarters came a campaign of murder and destruction, conducted against the civilian population in northern Israel and the Christian enclave in Southern Lebanon. Now Israel is being "punished" for the annexation of the Golan Heights.

The cant that accompanies every blow at Israel states that there has been no weakening of the American commitment to this country's security. This is a transparent cover for the undeniable thrust of American policy — the reduction and emasculation of Israel in accordance with Arab prescriptions.

It should now be clear to all that we are faced not by isolated phenomena, but by a many-pronged American policy. Nevertheless to judge by their behaviour, neither the Government of Israel nor the Labour Opposition comprehend the grim proportions of that policy and the danger it represents to the Jewish state.

The Prime Minister woke up belatedly to Washington's intolerable practice of persistent public insult, of hectoring and threatening and "punishing" Israel. The fierce but well-deserved riposte that he conveyed through the American ambassador, however, contains no indication that he intends to meet the larger, overwhelming threat with which Israel — and the Jewish people — are to be confronted.

Completion of the evacuation of Sinai will be followed by a campaign of pressure, with Egypt participating. It will be a concerted effort by the Arab states and Europe, with US collaboration, to squeeze Israel into the 1949 Armistice lines. And Israel is to surrender sovereignty over Jerusalem.

Refusal will be met by the threat of sanctions, and the gradually materializing threat of war with the Arabs. Israel will lack its security belt in the south, the Sinai peninsula being in Arab hands. It is not for nothing that what the Arabs and their supporters today fear most is an Israeli decision to halt the withdrawal from Sinai on the grounds of dramatically changed circumstances — a principle enshrined in international law and used more than once by the US against Israel.

The Arabs and their supporters know well that the surrender of the Sinai security belt now, when its dire consequences are plain for all to see, would be for Israel an act of historic irresponsibility.

To halt the withdrawal would require great courage, and it would necessitate other supplementary steps, notably establishment of rational machinery for information, in order to mobilize Israel's multitude of friends throughout the world against delegitimization of Jewish statehood and Israel's physical elimination; a serious attempt to set up a national unity government; and a drastic belt-tightening economic policy, to put an end to Israel's dependence — indeed, to implement Abba Eban's 1969 forecast: to "manage with our own resources for a considerable time".