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### **Unfunny humour in U.S. policy**

THE HUMOUR, unintended, that often emerges from U.S. policy towards Israel was recalled in the past fortnight by several unrelated events. One was the visit to the Old City of Jerusalem by German Chancellor Helmut Kohl, whose lack of inhibitions cried out for comparison with Washington's convoluted posture towards Jerusalem.

The United Nations plan in 1947 for the partition of Palestine included the recommendation that Jerusalem be "internationalised." Like the rest of the plan this recommendation was drowned by the Arabs' violent rejection of the idea of a "territorial compromise" and their attempt to impose an alternative plan: the annihilation of the Jewish community.

The bitter battles for Jerusalem resulted in Jewish retention of the western part, while the Transjordanian Arabs captured and later annexed the Old City and its neighbourhood: eastern Jerusalem.

In poker-faced disregard of these bloody events, their significance and their aftermath, the United States pontifically decided that the UN plan was still alive and Jerusalem an "international" city. When Israel proclaimed Jerusalem (at the time – the western part) as its capital, Washington refused to recognize the fact (and encouraged other nations to follow suit). Its embassy was established in Tel Aviv.

In 1967 came the second Jordanian aggression in Jerusalem: Hussein's effort to subjugate the new city (as he tried once more, together with Egypt and Syria, to conquer all of Israel). This ended in failure. Israel liberated the Old City, healed the wounds of a divided Jerusalem – and henceforth it was a united city that served as the capital of the Jewish State.

Precisely then – wonderful to relate – Washington insisted on seeing the city divided. Suddenly only the new City was "international." Its eastern part had been transformed magically into "occupied Arab territory"; and all subsequent U.S. "plans" envisage its "return" to its Arab "owners." So decisively has it ceased to be "international" that Washington permits no official American even to set foot in it under Israeli auspices.

Needless to say, the luster of Jerusalem has not thereby been dimmed, nor are its inhabitants dismayed. Nor will Israel give up its capital, the focus exclusively (it so happens) of this nation's love and longing since three millennia before Washington was born.

Only, the American government does look foolish – unnecessarily.

KING HUSSEIN of Jordan has just exposed another humorous facet of American official thinking. The Washington policy-makers are great upholders of the fairy-tale that there are two Palestinian Arab nations – the eastern one called Jordanian, and the newly born "Palestinian" – which suddenly announced that it had been deprived of a homeland.

The demonstrable refutation of these pretences by the realities of geography and history, ancient and modern, do not disturb Washington's intellectual composure.

That this alleged "Palestinian" nation did not assuage its declared hunger for "self-determination" in Judea and Samaria between 1948 and 1967 when, under Arab rule they were available; and the repeated declarations by various Arab personalities –

and the assertion of the PLO (the “sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people”) that Jordan is in fact also Palestine, have never moved the U.S. policy-makers to call the monstrous bluff.

The confession, slipping out from Arab sources from time to time, that the myth of a “Palestinian people driven out of its homeland” was created only in order to camouflage the real cause of the conflict: the determination of the gigantic Arab nation to crush the minuscule Jewish State, has always passed unremarked by Washington. It does not fit the anti-Zionist doctrines of the State Department.

Now King Hussein has exposed dramatically the nakedness of American promotion of a fraudulent claim. He has revived the Jordanian parliament, which had been moribund since 1967, and ensured that half of its seats be filled by “Palestinians” – that is, by allegedly deprived, homeless, stateless Arabs.

He has thereby reaffirmed that the Arabs from western Palestine, so many of whom even live in Eastern Palestine, have no lack of “self-determination,” do not lack a State. “We are one family,” Hussein declared. One State is surely enough for one family.

It does not really make any difference to Israel under which caption she is to be pressed to give up Samaria, Judea and Gaza to the Arabs; but Hussein has left the American superpower shifting awkwardly from one foot to the other.

WASHINGTON’s twists and turns on the “Egyptian front” are no less entertaining.

The U.S. administration leaders were the underwriters of the Camp David agreement as well as of the peace treaty between Egypt and Israel. It was President Carter who twisted Prime Minister Begin’s arm into agreeing to a clause in the treaty – demanded by Sadat – which legitimizes Egypt’s going to war with Israel at the behest of her fellow-Arab states. After its signing, the Americans never uttered a peep at the failure of the Egyptians to implement most of the clauses in the treaty and their violation of most of the others. The peace treaty, except for its formal shell, and except for the transfer of Sinai to Egyptian hands, has remained largely a dead letter.

But Egypt, expelled from the Arab League and excommunicated from the Islamic international institutions for having signed an agreement and a treaty with the intolerable Jewish State, has been working to be “readmitted.”

It is possible, from the known facts, to construct the terms of her application. She has been able to explain that nothing has really changed in her attitude to Israel. Signing an agreement with Israel, even a peace treaty, was essential in order to regain Sinai. Indeed, it was manifestly permissible under Islamic doctrine, as it served the ultimate Moslem purpose. “Arab land” had been regained and the Israeli enemy clearly weakened strategically. The treaty had been approved in this spirit by the supreme Islamic theological authority, at Cairo’s El-Azhar University.

She could claim moreover that in practice she had refrained from implementing the various agreements signed in the wake of the treaty. Trade relations are more or less frozen. Egypt permits practically no tourism to Israel. Most important, she has ensured that there be no diminution of the daily dose of hatred for Israel and for Jews purveyed by the media. The Egyptian ambassador has been absent from Tel Aviv for over a year. In short, Egypt could claim that she has “given” Israel even less than the bare bones required by the treaty – and what she has given can be withdrawn in 24 hours.

Finally, she could demonstrate that, far from reducing the level of her military preparedness, she has raised it substantially. Manpower, for example, has not been reduced, the tank force and the air force have been strengthened and reorganized, the arsenals have been increased. Should a war with Israel become necessary, Egypt is not a whit less prepared than she was before the peace treaty – and she has added the tremendous strategic advantage of Sinai to the total Arab resource.

ALL THIS did not mean, however (so Egypt must have pleaded), that public statements could be made. On the contrary, discretion was essential, not only in order to keep Israeli complaints and dissatisfactions at the meager fruits of the treaty within bounds, but in order not to embarrass Washington.

Washington was naturally aware of the true state of affairs, of the “magnificent Egyptian deception” in the Camp David agreement and in the peace treaty – but had made no protest nor even any reproachful comment. These documents were regarded in the U.S. as their greatest diplomatic achievement in many years. To reveal officially that the peace treaty was a sham, designed merely to retrieve Sinai, would have a negative effect on relations with the U.S. – which in addition to moral, political and financial aid, had been most forthcoming in the supply to Cairo of planes and other arms.

The Egyptian presentation of these facts and arguments obviously had the desired effect. The Islamic conference at Casablanca decided to invite Egypt to rejoin. But that presentation had one unforeseen consequence. Last week the conference host, King Hassan of Morocco, gave the game away. He told the press that President Mubarak had told him that with Sinai regained, the Camp David agreement had no further meaning. It was a dead letter.

Hassan’s statement was received with great “perturbation” in Washington. The U.S. ambassador in Cairo called on President Mubarak – and was able of course to reassure Washington: Mubarak had said no such thing.

It may be asked: how does Israel appear in all this? A very relevant question, which demands an answer.