

Scenario For Disaster

Scene I: The United States becomes more even-handed in its Middle East policy. It is not that the U. S. turns enemy to Israel. But for every dollar of support sent to Israel, a dollar is sent to Egypt. For every admonition given to Egypt, an admonition is given to Israel. More friendly to both sides, the U. S. is less an advocate for either.

SCENE II: Egypt has played the waiting game. After several years, it strikes again, begins to put intolerable demands and pressures on Israel. The U. S. has cemented its even-handedness and now has much more invested in the Arab lands than it had before 1967. And vice versa. The U.S. clucks its tongue and "stays out of it." Israel is, to put it mildly, in the most serious trouble of its history.

SCENE III: Meanwhile, back in this country, American Jewry is the most visible and vehement sector in protesting the U. S. government "hands off" policy. The main reason why the American public supported Israel before Scene I opened was because the American government had established support of Israel as *the* pro-American, anti-Soviet position. After Scene II, that is no longer the case. The U.S. government's hostility towards American Jewish protest is vigorously reflected by the American public.



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The above is just a scenario designed to sketch the most nightmarish possibilities. But the curtain may already have risen on Scene I. The United States and Egypt are becoming friendly and entangled, nothing in itself to object to. But the U.S. vote in that recent United Nations resolution may foreshadow the direction of the play. After a routine attempt to amend it, the U.S. joined the resolution to condemn the Israeli retaliation in Lebanon, without condemning the massacre which occasioned the retaliation. All else aside, it was a sign that the United States was abdicating its advocacy role in the Middle East. Of course, Scene II could still turn out to be different than the one sketched above.

Alternate Scene II: Some peaceful compromise having been established, Egyptian leaders strike out finally to attain social progress for their own people. So they concentrate on domestic affairs, and even start to talk guardedly about establishing some line of economic cooperation with Israel. For the first time, the Israeli can see the outline of a peaceful future in the Middle East. Then, of course, Scene III becomes moot.

The outcome depends on how the current Scene I is played out. For example, the U. S. Secretary of State could be conducting negotiations with Scene II in mind; trying to build in safeguards and a network of commitments, including a pattern of U. S. economic commitments, all of which would push in the direction of *Alternate Scene II*. He could be.

Or Congress could exert enough influence on Scene I so that it does not turn into a disastrous Scene II. If it is disastrous for Israel, it will be disastrous for the U. S. and world peace as well. Without Israel, the U.S. will lose its special edge in the Middle East. The Soviet Union may be playing its own waiting game in the wings, pending Scene II.

But such intervention would take a special, unusual interest and vision on the part of Congress. And *vision*-eyes lifted from the immediate ground to the horizons of national life - does not seem to be the order of the day. That may be, ultimately, the most discouraging aspect of the presidential tapes. Our national metaphor at the moment is not "*soar*" but *thud*." The thuddy, expeditious quality of national life can permeate and affect everything, including this particular scenario. Unless, in the face of adversity, there is a fairly swift recovery of national vision. That *has* happened before.

Here is one more reason for American Jewish agencies and institutions to turn a larger part of their attention and resources to the pertinent quality of *American* life.

Given all that, which Scene II do you believe is most likely to take place?