

# NEWSPAPER VIEWS

BY I.L. KENEN

When President Ford met President Sadat to promote a resumption of bilateral Egyptian-Israeli negotiations, he had a valuable weapon -- if he wished to use it -- with which to dispel the Arab illusion that Israel is doomed because of Arab oil power and alleged erosion in U.S. support for Israel; the letter urging U.S. support

for Israel signed by 76 senators.

That is the view of a number of editors who commended the letter because of fear that the ongoing "reassessment" of U.S. policy portends a pro-Arab tilt.

Among those who praised the letter, the Miami Herald (May 23) calls the Senate action "significant and historic" because a majority are telling the Administration to stand firmly with Israel at a time when it appears to be tilting away from all-out support.

"Never before has pro-Israel sentiment been publicly so strong in the Senate," says the Evening Journal of Wilmington, Del. (May 23). "They want to ensure that Israel is not compelled to negotiate from a position of weakness or accept annihilation disguised as settlement."

The Philadelphia Inquirer (May 28) predicts progress if the Arab countries "understand that the United States will not coerce Israel into surrendering its own security..."

Calling the senators' views and concerns "sound" and "valid," the Richmond Times-Dispatch (May 29) believes that "it is important to let the Arabs know that the United States does not intend to accept a settlement that would constitute Israel's death warrant."

Columnist J. F. terHorst, former Ford spokesman, speculates in the Baltimore Sun (May 28) that senators signed to serve their political ambitions, and he maintains that Ford "resents the heavy-handed untimely letter..."

The Chicago Tribune (May 24) contends that the letter's sentiments may be "admirable, but the timing is atrocious."

The Washington Post of June 1 says that the Administration was "remiss in failing to give Congress a larger sense of participation in what was being billed as a fresh look at a vital aspect of American foreign policy." But the Post calls the letter "mischievous..."

The Washington Star (May 26) finds that the text of the letter is "for the most part unexceptionable." But it could undermine Arab confidence in the U.S. mediatory role.

A sarcastic rebuke to the Star's editorial came from within -- from its own Pulitzer Prize winning columnist, Mary McGrory. McGrory wrote on May 30 that "the Senate has

reduced to ashes the claims of erosion of support, put out by an Administration that has been trying to press Israel to the wall..."

I. L. Kenen, Editor Emeritus of the Near East Report, will welcome questions and comments about the media. Write him at: 990 National Press Building, Washington, D. C. 20045.



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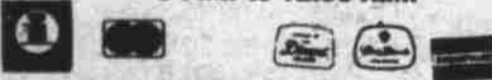


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