

SPECIAL INTERVIEW WITH CYRUS VANCE
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stood." Shimon Peres, who may well be Israel's next Prime Minister, was the Defense Minister who ordered the raid on Entebbe in Uganda on July 4, 1976. Ironically, Peres found himself in the Oval Office with Vance and President Carter on the very day that the rescue mission failed in Iran.

Soon after Vance resigned, Peres, now the leader of Israel's opposition Labor Party, told me: "Israel will surely feel Secretary Vance's loss, and will always be grateful for his superb work on the peace treaty."

Israel's just departed Defense Minister, Ezer Weizman, was in Washington as Cyrus Vance prepared to depart. Weizman and Israeli Ambassador Ephraim Evron were Vance's last official appointments as Secretary of State -- a fitting choice (although an accidental one) in view of the amount of energy Vance had expended in Middle East peacemaking efforts.

Harold Saunders, Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern and South Asian Affairs, sat in on the farewell meeting with Vance, Weizman and Evron. Evron recalled that the same four men had also worked together during Vance's earliest involvement with Israel in the

1960's.

As Deputy Secretary of Defense, Vance had signed the agreement for the supply of Skyhawk aircraft to Israel, the first combat aircraft which the United States provided to Israel. Saunders was a senior member of the National Security Council staff (from 1961 to 1974). Evron was a minister at the Israeli Embassy. And Weizman was Chief of the Israeli Air Force.

Three weeks after Vance became the 57th Secretary of State in 1977 he went on his first foreign trip -- to the Middle East. He made numerous other trips to that region as President Carter's chief negotiator, shuttling also between Egypt and Israel to bring the two sides together. Later, during the Camp David Summit, Vance spent 13 days in intensive talks with Premier Begin and Presidents Sadat and Carter, and their teams.

And Begin and Sadat were the last two foreign leaders to visit the United States prior to Vance's resignation. In their separate visits last month, the Israeli Premier and the Egyptian President conferred at length with Vance.

And so Cyrus Vance's concern for Israel, and the regard that Israel's diplomats hold for him, belie reports of policy disputes or personality clashes between Washington and Jerusalem.

New York City Mayor Edward Koch accused

Vance of being one of five "anti-Israel" advisers of President Carter. But both Israeli officials and American supporters of Israel tell me they regard Vance as a "real friend" of the Jewish state, a person "deeply committed" to Israel's security and search for peace.

Vance himself, in the interview, spoke of his "admiration" for the Jewish state and his "marvelous relationships" with Ambassador Evron and other Israeli officials.

With his vast experience, and knowledge of the major issues and key personalities in the Middle East picture, Cyrus Vance is not likely to be over-looked when new ideas for solving the age-old problems are studied. Even though he is returning to his law practice in New York, he said he will keep himself informed on foreign policy issues, especially those relating to the Mideast and the Arab-Israeli peace negotiations.

While former Secretary Vance said he regrets the autonomy talks will not meet the target date of May 26, he added: "I'll follow the negotiations with much interest and I'll be available to lend a hand if I'm needed."

"Those negotiations must succeed because it is essential to maintain the momentum of the Camp David process."

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