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AN INDEPENDENT NEWSPAPER

Toward Mideast Peace

NOT WITHOUT some jostling, the negotiation of an Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty is proceeding apace. Jimmy Carter personally helped negotiate the compromise draft that both governments have now approved, Israel with certain amendments; Egypt demands some alterations, too. In gaining Cabinet approval of the draft, as in the Knesset vote terminating the Sinai settlements, Menachem Begin has been ready to put the drive for peace ahead of political loyalties cemented over 40 years. The two negotiating teams are again back at full strength in Washington, and they hope to complete a treaty by the anniversary of Anwar Sadat's Jerusalem visit on Nov. 19.

That is, in our view, the proper and positive context in which to view the latest flap over Israeli settlements in the West Bank. Mr. Begin, to keep his opposition from spoiling the treaty with Egypt, wanted to show there was no literal or direct linkage between Israel's decision to evacuate the Sinai and its determination to hold on to the West Bank and Gaza, under new conditions, pending future negotiations. Evidently he also wanted to retort politically to statements American diplomats have made to Jordan and West Bank Palestinians to draw them into those later talks. Both purposes were served by his announcement that Israel will expand some existing West Bank settlements. The State Department pronounced itself "deeply disturbed."

It is a three-level charade. First, the Israeli announcement was entirely political, and, given that only a handful of those Israelis claiming a right to settle in the West Bank actually wish to live there, it may not lead to any new settlers. Second, the protests are also political, and there is no reason to think that progress toward an Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty will be slowed. Finally, the logistic events will in time almost certainly produce an accommodation on the West Bank anyway. This is likely, no matter whether Israel makes provocative remarks on settlements or Palestinians decry Carter, David or King Hussein holds himself aloof, as all are doing now.

The really important development right now has to do with the attitude not of Israel or Egypt, but of Saudi Arabia, Egypt's principal patron and bankroller. The Saudis, it appears, are coming around to a position of support for Anwar Sadat's peace policy. They're keeping the money flowing and trying to restrain attacks by other Arabs. They have just agreed for the first time in 30 years, to let Israeli Arabs make the pilgrimage to Mecca. That is inadequate to the Arabs who insist upon nice, neat, hard edges on their politics. But it will be of great help to Mr. Sadat in drawing up to the more radical Arabs' attempts to drag him down. The peace process, in brief, continues to move ahead.

A Genuine Rockefeller

OUR CYCLOPEAN eye was caught by the juxtaposition of two recent stories—one about a St. Louis gunman who handed back \$23 to his victim because the sum was insufficient, the other about Nelson A. Rockefeller, who has gone into the business of selling reproductions of works of art. The gunman's contempt would never have been shown by Mr. Rockefeller or, we imagine, by any of the Rockefellers down through history. The Rockefellers know the value of \$23, and of \$1,750, and of \$7,500—the latter two figures being the prices of two of Mr. Rockefeller's new wares.

Now you may think it a bit much to shell out, say, \$850 for a framed cibachrome reproduction of Picasso's "Jeune Fille à la Mandoline," but the essential thing about the Picasso, or any of the reproduced Giacomettis or Toulouse-Lautrecs advertised in a special Neiman-Marcus catalogue ("itself a work of art"), is that the originals are owned by Mr. Rockefeller. For a mere \$850, then, one does not only tiptoe into the world of beauty, but into the world of the Rockefellers as well. In short, what Mr. Rockefeller seems

to be selling is his own glittery life, reproduced for price—though that is not what he claims. His professed reason for this enterprise is "to share with others" his "joy of living with these beautiful objects." And who would doubt his sincerity?

Good luck to him, we say. Every American deserves to make a million, or even a billion, depending on where one starts. One troubling memory lingers however, which we'll simply recount, and then let it go.

The event occurred in 1973, when Mr. Rockefeller then governor of New York, wanted to secure the Republican mayoral nomination for Robert Wagner, he invited five prominent New York City Republicans to Albany, to twist their arms. One of the guests, George Clark of Brooklyn, was furious with Mr. Rockefeller because of his friendship with Meo Esposito, the Brooklyn Democratic boss.

"Governor, you even gave him a Picasso!" furrowed Mr. Clark. At which Mr. Rockefeller smiled, recognizing the envy in Mr. Clark's fury.

"Hell, George," he said. "It was only a print."

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