

## WALTER CRONKITE – IMAGE #21

President Jimmy Carter had an idealistic vision of American leadership in world affairs. He presented himself as the anti-Nixon and as a world leader who rejected Henry Kissinger's "realism" in favor of human rights and peacemaking. Carter asserted: "Human rights is the soul of our foreign policy because human rights is the very soul of our sense of nationhood." He established the Office of Human Rights in the State Department.

Carter's crowning foreign policy achievement, which even his most bitter critics applauded, was the arrangement of a peace agreement between Israel and Egypt. In 1977 Egyptian President Anwar el-Sadat flew to Tel Aviv at the invitation of Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin. Sadat's bold act, and his accompanying announcement that Egypt was now willing to recognize the legitimacy of the Israeli state, opened up diplomatic opportunities that Carter and Secretary of State Cyrus Vance quickly pursued.

In 1978 Carter invited Sadat and Begin to the presidential retreat at Camp David in Maryland for two weeks of difficult negotiations. Together the three men crafted a "framework for peace" in the Middle East. The first part of the eventual agreement called for Israel to return to Egypt all land in the Sinai Peninsula that the Israelis had occupied since the Six-Day War in June, 1967 in exchange for Egyptian recognition of Israel as a sovereign nation. This agreement was successfully implemented in 1982 when the last Israeli settler vacated the Sinai. But the second part of the agreement, calling for Israel to negotiate with Sadat to resolve the Palestinian refugee dilemma, began to unravel soon after the Camp David summit.

By March 26, 1979, when Begin and Sadat returned to Washington, D.C., to sign the formal treaty. Begin had already made clear his refusal to block new Israeli settlements on the West Bank of the Jordan River, which Sadat had regarded as a prospective homeland for the Palestinians. Even so, Carter successfully persuaded Begin and Sadat to develop an enduring, although in retrospect limited, peace in the intractable Arab-Israeli conflict. In the wake of the Camp David accords most Arab nations condemned Sadat as a traitor to their Islamic cause. But, Carter and Vance were responsible for a dramatic display of high-level diplomacy that, whatever its limitations, made an all-out war between Israel and the Arab world less likely in the foreseeable future.