

cloisonné techniques of the Visigoths, the animals carved on standing stones by the Picts, or the silent dedication of unsung aristocratic pagan scribes, such as Symmachus, to whom we owe as great a debt for our classical inheritance as to the monastic copyists who followed them, she commands the reader's attention. But random reflections, however subtle or astute, are not enough—either for the general reader or the professional historian. Indeed, if one is interested in a broad, coherent picture of the times written with no less sensitivity to detail than *Barbarians and Romans*, more analytical acuity, and greater felicity of style, one is served far better by the first two volumes of the *Cambridge Medieval History*, Bury's *History of the Later Roman Empire*, Peter Brown's *The Making of Late Antiquity* or his recent *Society and the Holy in Late Antiquity*, and, of course, by Gibbon himself. One might even read the primary sources—Gregory of Tours, Orosius, Procopius, Ammianus Marcellinus, Augustine, and Bede—all easily accessible (many now in paperback), all endlessly rewarding.

NEGOTIATING FOR PEACE IN THE MIDDLE EAST

by **Ismail Fahmy**

(Johns Hopkins University Press; 330 pp.; \$25.00)

Sterett Pope

Ismail Fahmy served as Egypt's foreign minister between 1973 and 1977. He resigned in protest against Sadat's peace mission to Jerusalem. His diplomatic memoirs provided both a detailed account of his attempt to pursue a comprehensive Middle East peace settlement at Geneva and a stinging critique of Sadat's separate peace with Israel, which set back, perhaps permanently, Fahmy's hopes for a comprehensive settlement.

Fahmy's book begins with a report of a paper he delivered at a foreign policy symposium in Cairo in 1972, a paper that brought him to the attention of President Sadat and led to his appointment as foreign minister in 1973. The paper outlined the diplomatic agenda Fahmy was to pursue with some success during the four years he helped guide Egypt's foreign policy. This agenda included renewed military confrontation with Israel, establishment of more balanced relations with the superpowers, and negotiation of a comprehensive Mideast peace settlement that would address not only Israel's occupation of Arab lands but also the

Palestinian question. Fahmy argued that Egypt's heavy dependence on the Soviet Union could not prevent the Russians from forsaking Egypt's interests in the spirit of the period's nascent détente. To assure more room for diplomatic maneuver, Egypt should distance itself somewhat from the USSR and renew its relations with the United States. In all events, a dramatic military move against Israel was necessary to jar both superpowers out of their growing complaisance about the status quo in the Middle East and to spur them to participate in a comprehensive settlement.

The October War and the Arab boycott of 1973 realized the short-term goals that Fahmy had outlined a year earlier. They gave the Arab states a new sense of strength and unity, altered the military and diplomatic balance of power in the Middle East, and prepared the territorial gains of the Sinai I and II agreements, which Egypt achieved with the help of Kissinger's shuttle diplomacy. Fahmy viewed Kissinger's step-by-step approach to negotiation, however, as an obstacle to the comprehensive settlement he desired: This process, because predicated on a series of separate treaties between the Arab states and Israel, gave Israel increasing leverage with the completion of each step, divided the Arabs against themselves, and neglected the Palestinian question entirely. Moreover, Fahmy was highly critical of Kissinger himself, considering him a mendacious and manipulative diplomat who acted as "Israel's envoy" by constantly offering Israeli proposals as his own.

It is not surprising that Fahmy should evaluate American diplomats and politicians according to their ability to distance themselves from Israeli positions. Accordingly, he saves his highest praise for Richard Nixon, whom he describes as a strong leader and master geopolitician, in retrospect the only American president with the force and intelligence to put U.S. interests above those of Israel. Fahmy views Watergate as an Arab defeat and notes that, had Nixon "stayed in office, he would undoubtedly have used all his power and influence as President of the United States to obtain Israeli withdrawal from the occupied territories...."

The election of Jimmy Carter two years later restored Fahmy's hopes, because the new president quickly endorsed the idea of pursuing a comprehensive settlement at Geneva. Fahmy, himself one of the principal architects of the proposed Geneva conference of 1977, argues that it held great prospects for success and that critics have exaggerated the difficulties it would have encountered. He notes that two months prior

to its scheduled convening, the only matter that remained to be resolved was an appropriate formula for Palestinian representation. In Fahmy's view, the greatest obstacle at Geneva would have been Carter's refusal to exercise major pressure on Israel, pressure that, the American president had told him, would mean "political suicide." Fahmy was not favorably impressed: "A weak President is bad enough, but a frightened President is terrifying."

Sadat's memoirs tell us that Fahmy was the only advisor he consulted before going to Jerusalem. Fahmy opposed the trip: "I believed that it would harm Egypt's national security, damage our relations with the other Arab countries, and destroy our leadership of the Arab world....Furthermore [Sadat] could not demonstrate any proof that the Israelis would respond to his move with comparable good will." In effect, Sadat would be throwing away Egypt's "two cards"—the recognition of Israel and the termination of belligerency—without securing concessions from Israel. Finally, Fahmy argued that if Sadat's aim was to recover the Sinai, this would be the sine qua non of any comprehensive settlement. "Three American administrations," he added, were "aware of this fact."

Fahmy's account tends to emphasize international and personal factors at the expense of domestic and structural ones. He interprets Sadat's trip to Jerusalem as another of the "flights of fancy" and "publicity stunts" to which the Egyptian president was pathologically prone. He laconically dismisses popular acquiescence to the move as due to the traditional docility of the Egyptian masses, forgetting that Sadat's new policy of "peace and prosperity" was initially welcomed by millions of war-weary Egyptians, who had come to resent other Arab leaders, especially those of the Gulf, who seemed determined to fight Israel to the last Egyptian. But this popularity was short lived; and Fahmy is right to underline the "startling indifference" with which Egyptians greeted Sadat's assassination, so different from the public mourning of millions after the death of Nasser eleven years earlier.

In retrospect, Fahmy feels that the promises of Geneva have been fully vindicated by the consequences of Camp David. He argues not only as an Arab intellectual understandably aggrieved by Israeli policies in Lebanon and the occupied territories but also as an Egyptian patriot and policy-maker. In his view, Sadat's separate peace negated one of Egypt's greatest national assets: the country's leadership of the Arab world.