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IN OUR OPINION

MIDEAST PEACE

U.S. must help nurture this historic opportunity

Whether the breakthrough in relations between Israel and the Palestinians lives up to its promise will depend greatly on whether there is leadership that will move the process beyond this point.

President Bill Clinton was eloquent and gracious in capturing the importance of the moment at the White House on Monday. He told the New York Times in a weekend interview, though, that he had not yet had a chance to think about future strategy.

That's understandable; the celebration of the Mideast breakthrough already is being pushed off center stage by other issues, such as the North American Free Trade Agreement and health care. But the president needs to keep the pressure on to capitalize on the gains represented by the Israeli-Palestinian agreement.

That needs to happen on two levels. The peace process must be pushed to assure that the various bilateral agreements are worked out. The agreement between Jordan and Israel on an agenda for peace between them suggests that the parties know this is a moment of opportunity.

But it is also important that Syria and Israel attempt to advance their peace process. For

some time, there has been a sense that this bilateral agreement, as well as ones between Israel and Jordan and between Israel and Lebanon, could be put together. This moment simply must not be lost. This may be where U.S. leadership can make the greatest contribution.

Beyond that, the Clinton administration needs to have its diplomatic antennae alert to what happens on the ground in the West Bank and Gaza. Provisional self-rule for Palestinians there can lead to genuine accommodation, or it could bog down in a further campaign of terror by extremists who want the peace process to fail.

It is terribly important that both the Israelis and the Palestinians seize the opportunity they have now negotiated, and that they carefully advance trust-building measures between them.

On balance, there is every reason to believe that what was celebrated at the White House last Monday was indeed a turning point in the history of the Mideast. It is only prudent, though, for the Clinton administration to leave as little as possible to chance. What happens now is every bit as important as the patient diplomacy that brought about the breakthrough.



NATI HARNIK/AP
The handshake: Just a beginning



FROM OUR READERS

Is freer trade healthy for the U.S.?

The North American Free Trade Agreement is essential for the economic well-being of the U.S. consumer.

Free trade is the most effective way of keeping the cost of living down and the standard of living high. It would force U.S. corporations to improve quality and service to compete.

Americans must set aside their short-term fears of job losses, and look to the long-term effects of NAFTA in creating a vast international consumer economy.

Jason E. Harris
Detroit

Formula for gridlock

Your Aug. 31 editorial "Bonior vs. NAFTA: Democratic critics can't march forward into the past" described U.S. Rep. David Bonior's "revolt against the president whose policies he is supposed to defend."

Since when is the job of a Democratic representative to do only what a Democratic president tells him to do? Citizens from his district elected Bonior to act on their behalf.

The implications of your statement are that Bonior and his fellow Democrats should vote against all legislation proposed by a Republican president, and that no Republican senator or representative should vote for any of President Clinton's proposals. That's what causes gridlock, and you should not be endorsing it.

J.R. Cairns
Dearborn Heights

Valuable part of future

NAFTA is part of our future. Don't diminish its value.

Grace K. Van Sickle
Sterling Heights

Wage gap

The minimum wage is \$6 an hour in Canada, \$4.25 in the United States, and 60 cents in Mexico. Unless major changes are made, this alone should make it utter lunacy to enact NAFTA.

Harvey A. Moon
Livonia

The 20-to-1 rule

A North American economic bloc — the largest in the world — is a formidable and exciting concept.

Much of the opposition to NAFTA will dissolve if we incorporate this rule: No

one affiliated with any company can be compensated more than 20 times what the lowest-paid employee receives.

Any chief executive officer who permits wages of \$1 per hour is going to have to live on \$800 per week.

Michael J. Bourke
Eastpointe

It doesn't add up

They say Mexican consumers who earn \$2 per hour are going to buy our products, which we who make \$8 per hour can't afford. Is that good?

Louis Dymecki
Roseville



RON EDMONDS/Associated Press

President Bill Clinton signs side deals for the North American Free Trade Agreement on Tuesday. Watching, from left, are NAFTA supporters Gerald Ford, Tom Foley, George Mitchell, Jimmy Carter, Bob Dole and George Bush.

DANGEROUS POLICE?

Shooting raises more questions about excessive force

The courts now will decide whether two plainclothes Detroit police officers acted criminally in the shooting death of southwest Detroit resident Jose Iturralde last April. Whatever the outcome, their shooting an unarmed man six times is another compelling reason for a thorough review of police training and procedures.

Taken with the beating death of Malice Green and the city's astounding level of payouts to settle civil suits charging police brutality, the appearance is that Detroit police officers may not be getting enough training in a continuum of techniques — especially short of deadly force — and may not have the optimum range of equipment for managing conflict. The events also suggest a look should be taken at the control and guidance given officers, from the chief down to first-line supervisors.

In the death of Mr. Iturralde, officers Ira Todd and Rico Hardy — now suspended with pay — were ordered this week to stand trial on second-degree murder charges. The case has attracted less attention than it merits, but that's not all bad: The administration of justice should be compassionate to alleged victims, but dis-

passionate in its consideration of evidence.

Deputy Wayne County Prosecutor Robert Agacinski said the officers stopped Mr. Iturralde on a street for no reason. They allegedly did not identify themselves as police officers before pushing Mr. Iturralde against a wall and ordering him to take his hands out of his pockets. After Mr. Iturralde put his hand in his coat, the officers allegedly began to fire and continued to do so after he fell.

There is some question whether Mr. Iturralde spoke English well enough, or whether his faculties were sufficiently unimpaired, to understand what the officers said. There are continuing — and inadequately addressed — complaints that the Detroit Police Department does not have enough Spanish-speaking officers, especially in the city's southwest section.

Detroit's next mayor, acting significantly through the choice of a chief of police and civilian police commissioners, faces a string of nitty-gritty issues in the continuing battle to make the force appropriately sensitive to the diverse community it is sworn to serve and protect, and in making officers who feel threatened feel less often that their only reasonable response is violent.

DETROIT PRIMARY

Voters made important choices — not just for mayor

The predominant attention paid the two top finishers in this week's Detroit mayoral primary, Dennis Archer and Sharon McPhail, is hardly surprising. But other aspects of Tuesday's balloting also are worth noting.

Confronting a list of 115 candidates for City Council, many voters took refuge in familiar names, especially those of long-time incumbents who may or may not merit re-election. But the 18 finalists also include a number of enthusiastic, well-qualified challengers with fresh ideas. We hope voters will pay more attention to them in November, when the ballot will not be so formidably long.

The primary's sorting-out process also should allow voters to concentrate more on candidates for the city charter commission, as the question of charter reform it-

self becomes more salient between now and Nov. 2. Fortunately, the general-election field of commission candidates selected this week also appears talented and deep.

Wayne County Commissioner Jackie Currie's second-place finish in the primary contest for city clerk, placing her on the November ballot with 20-year incumbent James Bradley, represents at least a mild upset. It's to be hoped that she will continue to stimulate the debate the city needs on its elections and record-keeping procedures.

Finally, Detroiters kept faith with the city's young people by renewing the full voted millage for public school operations. Now it's time for Lansing to keep faith with the city — and the rest of the state — by developing a fairer school finance system, one that moves away from an inequitable overreliance on property taxes.

Two-war strategy perpetuates military waste

Secretary of Defense Les Aspin wants to maintain a military capable of fighting two wars at a time. Who does he think is going to gang up on us? Or is he planning to solve every nation's problems with our troops and resources?

The U.S. economy cannot continue to support such an extravagant military. We have 12 aircraft battle groups roaming the oceans, each larger than the navies of most countries. We have between 50 and 100 submarines wandering around the world guarding us. From what? And we're still building more?

What are our troops doing in Somalia? Why are they still in Korea? Do we need 100,000 soldiers to protect Europeans from other Europeans?

The U.S. military, with the most advanced equipment in the world, still had to call up reserves in the relatively small war in the Persian Gulf. Our military is not using its money wisely.

Let's bring the troops home. If you don't want to discharge them, put them to work building bridges and roads, guarding borders, fighting forest fires and reducing crime.

Joseph P. Migliore
Allen Park

Take Tailhook to civilian panel

Your Aug. 25 editorial on the Tailhook scandal failed by telling the Defense Department to try harder ("Tailhook Scandal: More embarrassment if Navy fails in its duty").

The issue can be solved only by a civilian panel. The Defense Department is incapable of investigating itself.

The female officers involved are citizens of the United States first, and members of the armed forces second. Let them address their complaints to their peers, not their oppressors. They deserve an unbiased hearing.

M. de K.T. Kennedy
Dearborn

PUT IT IN WRITING

Send your letters to the Editor, Detroit Free Press, 321 W. Lafayette, Detroit 48226. They must be signed and include the writer's full home address and day and evening telephone numbers. Because of space limitations, letters should be 200 words or less; all letters are subject to editing. Although we are able to use only a small percentage of the letters we receive, we value the views of those who take the time to send us their comments.

Put military bases to use

The federal government is closing military bases throughout the United States. At the same time, drug offenders are incarcerated in overcrowded facilities that often do not offer them treatment for their addictions.

Use the facilities at abandoned military bases for the incarceration and treatment of nonviolent drug offenders. Most military bases have a security perimeter in place. Kitchens, dining areas, barracks and extensive physical training facilities have obvious uses.

Most important, inmates could benefit from services of professionals trained in drug rehabilitation, and remain incarcerated until they are drug-free.

Peggy Devoid
Holland

Environmental balance

I was amused at the owl-loving drivel of columnist Hugh McDiarmid, when he whined about the Michigan Supreme Court decision allowing Gov. John Engler to reorganize the Michigan Department of Natural Resources ("Engler puts cloud over environment," Sept. 7).

Relax. All the governor plans to do is inject some much-needed life into the sluggish economy of Michigan, by streamlining our unnecessarily cumbersome environmental laws.

It is about time that the pendulum swing back toward economic concerns, and away from the environmental interests that have dominated the business climate of Michigan for the last two decades.

Thaddeus J. Hejka
Ann Arbor

Harmful television

Neither ABC nor WXYZ-TV seems to recognize that by continuing to numb us to violence, they are doing us violence ("Bocho's law: Push the limits," July 27).

Continuing to pound us with prime-time blood does us violence. Continuing to wash us in verbal abuse, one person to another, does us violence. Continuing to make money by relieving pain does us violence.

It isn't a question of censorship, and it certainly isn't a question of "serious adult drama." It's a question of a TV station making a few more bucks by deep-sixing social responsibility.

Bob Ovies
Royal Oak

Other uses for City Airport

I am tired of those who offer advice on the use of Detroit City Airport, but who are unfamiliar with its history.

The original topography included streams and other small areas of water. In the 1950s, there were plans to convert the airport to a major park, comparable to Rouge Park or Belle Isle.

Surely there are those among us who have a vision for its use other than as an airport. How about residential development, a park or a first-class shopping mall?

Paul Martinsky
Detroit