

March 16, 2005

## **A PALESTINIAN STATE WILL NOT BRING PEACE**

At my age, I can't help but insist that people learn their history before they tell us how to 'solve' the Arab- Israel conflict. President George W. Bush's vision of 'two states living side by side in peace' sounds nice - until it is subjected to a scrutiny of its factual components. The prophet Isaiah also had a vision of peace, about 3,000 years ago. It was a vision of the wolf dwelling with the lamb. He did not, however, suggest it as a practical policy.

Two salient facts relating to the perennial Arab hostility toward the Jewish people have been consistently ignored by 'quick-fixers,' including Jewish leaders and international policy makers. One is to grasp the extent of the deep antipathy Arabs have toward Jews.

By the middle of the 20th century, the Arab states had succeeded in emptying their territories of Jews. After periods of pressure and persecution, some 800,000 of our people were forced out of Egypt, Syria, Iraq, Lebanon, Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Libya, Yemen and Aden.

In 1978, when Egyptian president Anwar Sadat received the Sinai from prime minister Menachem Begin as part of the Israel-Egypt peace treaty, Sadat insisted that the relative handful of Jews living peacefully in Sinai had to be expelled. Without that expulsion there would be no treaty. Even the strategic advantage of Egypt's once more ruling Sinai were overridden in Sadat's heart by the almost primal desire to be rid of these Jews.

Thrice had Sinai, a territory almost empty of settled inhabitants, been used as a launching pad for war on Israel. The first war was launched as soon as the Jewish state was declared on May 14, 1948, after the Arab League warned the UN that it would not tolerate Israel's creation.

Nineteen years later, the Arab states, having failed to abort Israel's birth in 1948, decided to try for its destruction. Under the leadership of Egypt's Gamal Nasser they launched what became the Six Day War. In this contest they lost completely. Israel regained Judea and Samaria, which Transjordan had brazenly 'annexed' after 1948. Israel also regained the Gaza Strip, which Egypt had captured in 1948.

The Arabs had been so sure of victory that the war was advertised weeks in advance (and had Israel's Jews building shelters, digging trenches and making room in hospitals). Then, when Israel won conclusively, our government offered to cede the reconquered territory in return for peace. The offer was rejected: 'No peace, no negotiations, no recognition of Israel' came the reply from the Arab League.

A SECOND salient fact also too often forgotten by the 'experts' who have fast-fix formulae for peace is that those rejections of peaceful gestures - like the wars Israel was forced to fight - were not the work of 'Palestinians' but of the combined Arab states, led by Egypt, Syria and Jordan. No political entity called 'Palestine' or 'Palestinians' existed. It was only after 1967 that the Arabs of Palestine expanded worldwide the pan-Arab campaign for the elimination of Israel, using 'Palestinianism' as a tool.

It may not be fashionable to say so, but the evidence is overwhelming: If the Arabs were given a state in a part of Palestine, they would surely accept it as the next of the 'phases' for attaining the rest of the country - which they have been forecasting for years. It would inevitably make a serious contribution to the grievous weakening of Israel, strategically and politically. It is illusory in the extreme - and shockingly misleading - to suggest that it will bring peace.

All the evidence that crowds into our minds at the thought of a Palestinian Arab state squeezed into the heart of the Land of Israel cries out against it. The facts such a state would create on the ground (including an immediate and unpreventable membership of the Arab League) would only enhance the weapons of terror and inflame the pan-Arab threat of annihilatory war against Israel.

As for Prime Minister Ariel Sharon's disengagement plan: By his manipulations within our parliamentary democracy, his intention to expel Jews from their homes in their homeland, and his evident intention to give us 'more of the same' in Judea and Samaria, he is leading our people on a march of folly. As historian Barbara Tuchman wrote in the book of that name, there have been many leaders throughout the ages, in places from Troy to Vietnam who, heedless of logic and experience, determinedly led their people to disaster.