

**October 9, 2003**

## **ANATOMY OF A DISASTER**

Those few who did believe no doubt presumed that it was Saudi Arabia, one of the pillars of the plan, whose influence among the Arabs would ensure it a promising send-off - by the promised Palestinian action against Hamas, Islamic Jihad and the other assorted terrorist groups. According to the text of the map, even the Arab League, meeting in Beirut, had been consulted.

The line-up was most impressive. As official authors of the map, there was as solid a bunch of international pro-Arab Israel-bashers as could be found anywhere in the world. There was the Quartet comprising the European Union, the United Nations, the US State Department and Russia, backed at the front line by an authoritative Israelophobic British government.

While the central object of the map was to be a final settlement of relations between Israel and the Arabs, Israel was not consulted, and the planning operation was kept secret from its government. Historically, this may thus legitimately be described as the road-map plot against Israel. That Israel was thus slapped by her American ally was undoubtedly the reason why the Palestinian Authority, when officially shown the text of the road map, gleefully accepted it, and in the same breath demanded that Israel also accept it at once.

But the road map never got off the ground. Its first condition was never fulfilled. Former PA prime minister Mahmoud Abbas (Abu Mazen), when asked what he was doing about implementing the first - and crucial - condition of the map, seemed surprised at the idea that he was expected to fight, eliminate and disarm the terrorists. 'I,' he said, 'am not going to start a civil war.'

Soon afterwards, Abu Mazen, with a terrorist past for diplomatic credentials, and a doctoral thesis denying the Holocaust under his belt - was at once taken to America's official bosom, and declared a veritable savior.

He was immediately afforded a meeting with US President George W. Bush, and acclaimed by all as 'America's Man.' He was then dismissed by PA boss Yasser Arafat for showing various signs of independence. Abbas was replaced by Ahmed Qurei (Abu Ala) - a faithful yes-man to Arafat - who has resumed complete control of the Palestinian Authority.

WHAT, THEN, has happened to the road map, with its detailed sequence of events to come and an exact timetable leading like clockwork up to the date when a Palestinian state would be born?

Only two months ago the European Union's foreign policy representative, Javier Solana, reminded the world that the road map was the only way to peace. US Secretary of State

Colin Powell was in a more somber mood. Inured by State Department tradition not to be able to distinguish between murderers and their Israeli victims, he foretold dire biblical-sounding punishment for those who did not fulfill the road map. 'Both sides,' he said, would 'fall off a cliff' if they didn't stick to the road map. No less.

How come that the leaders of the Palestinian Authority, then headed by Abu Mazen, welcomed the road map with enthusiasm when they knew they had no intention of fulfilling its first commandment - fighting the terror? Had the Saudi Arabians who helped mastermind the road map not promised their American, European and British collaborators that (unlike Arafat's bluff at Oslo) the Palestinians would really fight the terrorists and take away their arms?

How come that when the Arabs refused to fulfill their commitment nobody fell off Powell's cliff? More significantly, neither he nor any of his international roadmapping colleagues even uttered a word of criticism of the Palestinians who had with such demonstrative eagerness welcomed the road map.

AND HOW come that even after Arafat's return to full power, putting the final stamp of failure on the road map, secretary Powell calmly announced last week that the road map was alive and kicking?

How is it that the senior American official handling the road map project, National Security Adviser Condoleezza Rice, speaking on August 25 (days after suicide bombers in three attacks had murdered 37 Jewish men, women and children in Jerusalem), reported that 'despite the recent horrific events' there was progress towards 'peace for Arabs and Israelis' - and never mentioned that the road-map peace plan had been vaporized by the Arab leadership's refusal to take action against the terrorists?

This is not merely misleading, nor even mere cynicism. The road-map makers have simply changed their policy. They have quietly canceled the Palestinian obligation to fight the terror and consigned it to oblivion.

After their shoddy and demeaning behavior toward Israel in preparing the road map, the Roadmappers are now even ignoring the Arabs' implacable persistence in the murder campaign. Here is what the US national security adviser told the Veterans' Meeting at San Antonio on August 25:

'Israel must fulfill its responsibilities to help ensure that a democratic, peaceful Palestine State is created.'

Rice also lectures Israel:

'It is in Israel's interests for Palestinians to govern themselves in a state that is viable and peaceful and democratic and committed to fighting terror.'

It is not enough that the US and her strange collection of anti-Israel collaborators issued the road-map diktat to Israel. The complacent remarks of both Powell and Rice suggest that with the Arabs having failed them, the US is now hinting broadly at a new diktat to Israel - and even describing it as Israel's 'responsibilities.'

Now the Palestinians are repeating an old Arafat trick. He and his followers actually denounce the murders committed by the terrorists - as they have done after the mass murder in Haifa. They do it in English for the foreign media; they do it in Hebrew for gullible Israelis. In Arabic they continue to celebrate every murder; they sanctify every terrorist leader, and they canonize every suicide bomber.

One must hope that the government of Prime Minister Ariel Sharon will not wait to be offered such a new and more serious attack on Israel's vital interests. The government should take the bull by the horns and establish once and for all that the road map, distasteful to Israel from the start, certainly contains no obligations or responsibilities in its new manifestly emasculated state.

Israel will not participate in any new plan affecting the future of the country and its interests, except as a matter of direct negotiation with a prior agreed agenda. Furthermore, Israel will continue to direct her energies to the defense of its people and the rooting out of terrorism in all its forms, wherever it occurs in the Land of Israel.