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ARIEL SHARON TRIPS ON THE ROAD MAP

It was in 1969, two years after Israel's historic victory in the Six Day War, that foreign minister Abba Eban, in a far-ranging interview with a team of German journalists from Der Spiegel, came out with his reference to Auschwitz. He had been asked 'What territory are you prepared to return [to Jordan], and which do you want to retain?'

Eban, one of the foremost doves of his day, replied: 'We have said publicly that the map will never be the same as it was on June 4, 1967. The whole issue for us is one of security and of principle; the map of June represents insecurity and danger. I am not exaggerating when I say that for us it contains something of a reminder of Auschwitz.'

'For when we recall our situation in June 1967 we shudder to think what would happen to us if we were to be defeated: the situation with the Syrians on the heights and us in the valley, with the Jordanian army in sight of the sea, with the Egyptians in Gaza and their hands at our throats. This is a situation which shall not return to our history.'

That was 34 years ago. Now a broad, diplomatically coordinated movement led by a so-called Quartet - two governments, the US and Russia, and two international conglomerates, the United Nations and the European Union, volubly supported by Britain - is united in purpose to bring about, inter alia, the compression of Israel into the borders at which Eban shuddered and to which the Jewish people swore we would never return.

Even to the civilian amateur, a survey of Israel's geopolitical neighborhood will demonstrate the combined pan-Arab potential for war on Israel. As for motive - he will need no deep study to discover the persistent unmitigated all-Arab passion for Israel's annihilation.

Ironically enough, a catalyst for the international ganging-up with its road map for a Palestinian state within those borders has been precisely Israel's Prime Minister Ariel Sharon, who publicly announced that he favored the creation of a Palestinian state. True, the road map was accepted by his party and the Knesset only after he had submitted 14 amendments to it - amendments that have not been published.

There are also numerous difficulties on the Arab side, so that nothing may come of the plan. With Sharon's affirmation, however, the sponsors of the road map can claim that they have been given a green light for its implementation.

How come the Americans forged an alliance with the forces that so fiercely opposed the US war on Iraq, and that amid much derogatory criticism of President George W. Bush?

As a matter of fact, this is easily understood. The American State Department has approximately the same attitude toward the Arab-Israeli dispute as the other components

of the Quartet and its supporters. These all favor the Arabs; and the only adjustment the Americans had to make in order to feel comfortable in their company was to start asserting that the Arab murder campaign against Israel must not be treated as part of The Terror against which the US was pledged to fight.

It emerges that President Bush's much-acclaimed speech of June 24, 2002, that seemed to have all the hallmarks of inspiration for universal resistance to terror, was not to be taken literally.

The proponents of the road map were, moreover, in a great hurry to get started on its implementation. The war with Iraq was still in progress when British Prime Minister Tony Blair urged that the Palestinian conflict be tackled as soon as the war came to an end.

Why the special hurry? There was a reason for that too.

IT HAD become urgent to rescue the Palestinian Arabs. Their intifada had failed in its immediate purpose. The campaign of murder of Jewish men, women, and children, preferably - though not exclusively - in public places where the toll was highest, was designed to bring Israel to its knees. But despite the near-unbearable distress and unprecedentedly severe economic damage, Israel remained unbowed.

The IDF began delivering powerful counter-blows at the terror organizations, and economic life in the Arab community was almost completely disrupted. The whole fabric of Arab organized society was in danger of destruction. The new 'prime minister' of the Palestinian Authority, Mahmoud Abbas (Abu Mazen), told an internal conference in mid-July that 75 percent of the PA institutions in Gaza had been destroyed, and in the West Bank - Judea and Samaria - it was 100 percent.

The optimistic statements by some Israeli leaders that Israel had 'won' have, however, been very premature. Yasser Arafat, who had planned the intifada for half a year before it broke out, knew perfectly well that the Jewish response would be hard; consequently he devoted much effort to bringing about international intervention. He knew from experience with the US that intervention would dictate a moral equivalence to 'both sides,' and then would come down on Israel with demands for concessions and withdrawals.

Arafat was not mistaken. It was only the Iraq war that delayed the coming of the intervention: the road map.

There is a precedent to the road map phenomenon. In the Yom Kippur War Israel had turned the tables on the Egyptian aggressor. It was on the brink of a tremendous victory. Its armies stood poised at the gates of both Cairo and Damascus. Secretary of state Henry Kissinger, engaged in an anxious courtship of Egypt, rushed to Moscow, where it was agreed that they would ask the UN to declare an immediate cease-fire. A stunned Israel government obeyed the order.

From that moment, Kissinger launched a campaign of pressure - including threats of Soviet military intervention (which he himself had invented) - to bring about a series of withdrawals that finally landed Israel even beyond the lines at which it had been attacked by Egypt.

Golda Meir and defense minister Moshe Dayan (who a year later publicly described how Kissinger had bluffed him) at least had the excuse of the tensions of a war situation and their inability to judge, under pressure, how serious the threats of America's master-manipulator - Kissinger - were.

No such excuse is available to Sharon for accepting a document made in secret, hostile in purpose, prepared in collusion with some of Israel's worst enemies.

In rejecting such cavalier treatment Sharon would have gained the support and respect of most Americans. Moreover, Israel is now experiencing the most solid Congressional support it has ever had. Instead Israel has been maneuvered into an Oslo-like position. It is Israel that is being called upon to make concessions.

As for the Arabs, who were to start the whole road map process by putting an end to the terror, we are told that Abu Mazen is not strong enough to disarm and dismantle the terror groups. He needs 'strengthening.' This is exactly what we were told about Arafat at Oslo: He did not have the strength to deal with terrorist groups; so we gave him rifles - a most valuable contribution to his intifada.

Consequently, Israel is being called upon to throw Jews out of settlements and most emphatically to release Palestinian prisoners. Having already released some hundreds, it is now under greater pressure to release more and more (and thus provide manpower for the next intifada). Indeed, Israel's concessions are the only subject under serious discussion.

Meanwhile, Hamas and Islamic Jihad leaders declare repeatedly that they have no intention of giving up their arms. They intend, they say, to use them until Israel is destroyed.

And Arafat remains in his compound at Ramallah, laughing his head off at the stupid Israelis - who are unable to learn, even from 55 years of experience, that the Arabs do not intend to make peace with a living Israel.