

February 24, 1995

BLOWING IN THE WIND

LAST week, Prime Minister Rabin unveiled a new sample of the fatuities with which he has enriched the black humor of his two-and-a-half years of government. Speaking of the recent Egyptian barrage of anti-Israel acts and demands, he exclaimed, "There is an ill wind blowing from the Egyptian Foreign Ministry" - a wind which, he added, he hoped would soon blow over. The suggestion that this wind is something new and fleeting serves to befog the truth that it has been blowing incessantly since 1948.

Its primary ideological origin is the Moslem-Arab assertion that no Jewish (or indeed Christian) state shall exist in the "Arab world." Like all constant winds, the measure of its violence fluctuates, but its direction does not change. Rabin is not the only culprit. Every Israeli government since 1977 has ignored or misinterpreted the Egyptian establishment's unconcealed gut-hostility toward Israel's existence.

In signing a peace treaty with Egypt, the Begin government and the Labor opposition alike ignored the evidence that in Egyptian eyes the acquisition of Sinai was primarily the consummation of a phase in the dismantling of Israel. ("Phased" destruction of Israel was originally proposed by the late Tunisian president Habib Bourguiba in 1955 - long before the Six Day War.) Maybe they had not read the rabid anti-Jewish sermon delivered by Anwar Sadat (yes, the peacemaker) in a Cairo mosque in 1971.

Referring to an "agreement" between Mohammed and the Jews of Medina, he said: "The most splendid thing that the prophet Mohammed did was to drive them out of the whole Arabian peninsula ... They are a nation of liars and traitors, contrivers of plots, a people born for deeds of treachery ... We shall not give up an inch of our territory ... We shall not negotiate with Israel ... nor bargain with them over a single one of the rights of the Palestinian people." Maybe the Israeli leaders had also never read the published report of the 1975 symposium of the Egyptian intellectual community.

There, in summing up, Boutros Boutros-Ghali (now secretary-general of the UN) said that the Jews must give up their status as a nation and Israel as a state, and assimilate as a community in the Arab world. Otherwise, he predicted, there would be repeated wars. The same idea, couched in more brutal terms, permeates the Palestinian Covenant.

Were Israel's political leaders unaware that the lethal covenant had been endorsed - at Rabat in 1974 - by all the Arab states, including Egypt? They certainly were made aware of that Egyptian "wind" when they heard Sadat himself speaking in the Knesset in November 1977, when he was already negotiating for an agreement with Israel, presumably about Sinai. Here are key passages: "To be explicit ... complete withdrawal from the Arab land captured in 1967 goes without saying ... all of it, including Arab Jerusalem ... " Sadat was at that time violating his vow never to negotiate, but he received specific absolution from the highest Moslem authority - Cairo's El Azhar University - on the traditional understanding that signing a treaty with Israel would help to gain the ultimate objective. Then, as though to justify that absolution, no sooner had Israel completed evacuating Sinai (April 1982) than the Egyptian delegate to an all-Arab conference in Kuwait, Ismet Abdel Meguid, announced an 11-point catalog of Egypt's demands on Israel.

What peace? They were the perennial unchanging demands for Israel's self-immolation. THE WIND continued to blow over the years. Remember Sadat's ferocious refusal to allow a single Jew to remain in Sinai? The failure to implement the various agreements that flowed from the peace treaty? The diplomatic initiatives to dissuade African and other states from resuming relations with Israel? And what about the blocking of tourism to Israel, as well as the veto of business relations? Egyptian support for anti- Israel UN resolutions - which made nonsense of the Camp David agreement and the peace treaty? And the continued and uninterrupted Nazi-style propaganda against Israel and the Jewish people in the controlled Egyptian media? The record, even of snubs and contempt, is endless.

For 17 years, President Mubarak has successfully resisted repeated obsequious appeals to visit Israel. He put a plane at the disposal of the murderers of Leon Klinghoffer to help them escape to Tunis. Told of the brutal cold-blooded murder of seven Israeli tourists in Sinai, he dismissed the incident as a matter of no importance.

Now, suddenly, Egypt's massive campaign to get Israel to sign the nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty has provoked a burst of self-revelation in Israel. Shimon Peres, forced to explain Israel's refusal, proclaims that "Israel is the only state in the world threatened with destruction." In his wake came two important commentators, former generals and now voluble political doves. Shlomo Gazit wrote (The Jerusalem Post, February 14): "The problem we now face, my Egyptian friends, isn't the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction in the region.

The real problem, as we see it, is the Arab scheme to destroy Israel as a state and as a people." And Avraham Tamir saw it the same way in Yediot Aharonot (February 20). Is it a mere coincidence that just as Egypt began exerting maximum pressure on Israel to sign the NPT, the summit meeting among the heads of Egypt, Syria and Saudi Arabia took place in Alexandria? All three countries are committed to eliminating Israel. All three have been arming more feverishly than ever.

Israel, already weakened territorially and morally, and threatened by the Rabin-Arafat peace treaty with shrinkage to the 1949 armistice lines, is surely approaching the point of "adequate" vulnerability. At that point, these three will be initiating the next - penultimate - phase of the total reduction of Israel. Is it not likely, then, that Cairo, Riyadh and Damascus have begun preparing the blueprint for their intervention at that stage?