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### **Confronting the Reagan Plan**

PRIME MINISTER Shamir has reason to claim that he made possible the meeting this week between Hussein and Arafat. If it results in an agreement “authorizing” Hussein to enter into “negotiations with Israel,” Shamir could claim at least a share of the credit for this achievement as well.

It is feasible that Arafat, who has come quite a way down in the world, may, after fresh calculation, agree in the end (albeit with reservations) to give the required consent. True, such agreement would arouse the ire of the Syrians; but their hostility is in any case an established fact (for the time being). They are after all the sponsors and directors of the rebel faction in his Fatah organization.

What then can he lose by joining the “moderate” Arab camp – which is all for generously allowing two stages for Israel’s elimination? Moreover he knows that the Americans are falling over themselves to find some formula that will enable them to be seen in public with him.

The U.S. administration no doubt realizes that Arafat and Hussein will not accept the Reagan Plan as it stands as a basis for negotiation, though they might formally combine it with the Fez Plan. From Washington’s point of view, however, the very act of agreement, the very declaration by Hussein that he is willing to negotiate with Israel (whatever limiting conditions he formulates) will be seen and paraded as a great diplomatic achievement – a commodity deeply desired in Washington.

This indeed is precisely why Washington needed a physically available Arafat, why it pressed Shamir to stop shelling Arafat’s positions in Tripoli so that he could get out. True, it urged hastily-conceived “humanitarian considerations” in justification of its importunities for saving the arch-murderer. This crude pretence was swallowed by Mr. Shamir: the Israeli government compounded its flabbiness by subsequently protesting that it had been deceived. Can it be that Shamir really did not understand what Washington needed Arafat for?

A STRIKING feature of Washington’s pronouncements about the Reagan Plan ever since the president first propounded it has been the marked way in which they have ignored its unqualified rejection by Israel. They have concentrated throughout on the vital importance of achieving Hussein’s agreement to negotiate.

The effect of these pronouncements has inevitably been to create the impression that if, after all these years of American effort to achieve his agreement, Hussein is actually prepared to negotiate, actually willing to recognize that Israel exists, Israel will just have to “create the conditions to enable Hussein” to negotiate or be judged “intransigent.”

The probably “minimal” conditions for Hussein’s agreeing to sit down at the negotiating table have been so often repeated with approval by Washington that by now they are probably regarded by many in the U.S. as most natural and most proper. These conditions are: first, the inclusion of the status of Jerusalem in the agenda of negotiations – that is, Israel must agree in advance to cancel its sovereignty over its capital; and, second, a “real” freeze on the establishment of Jewish communities in Judea, Samaria and Gaza (never, of course, to be resumed unless the Arab government envisaged there

by the U.S. and the Arabs goes Zionist). Thereby Israel would make the historic admission, *inter alia*, that it is Jewish settlements, and not the Arabs' annihilationist purpose and attempts, that are the cause of the conflict.

Yet the government has, throughout, done virtually nothing to counter this incessant propaganda. Prime Minister Begin's initial rejection of the Reagan Plan has not been followed up by any serious effort at enlightening public opinion. Indeed the U.S. administration has been able to promote the Reagan Plan (in which both these pre-conditions are included) virtually without public debate.

The government under Begin complacently disregarded the need for a major "information war." Had the necessary structure for this been established, it would have already disseminated throughout the U.S. (and in Israel for that matter) the grim truth about the Reagan Plan. The Shamir regime has followed suit. It has adopted the classic attitude once attributed by Max Nordau to the Jews in general: only after they are drenched and have contracted pneumonia do they buy an umbrella.

NEVER HAS a document so often invoked been so little actually read as the Reagan Plan. On September 1, 1982 the president made his speech about the plan and there referred to some of its elements. The plan itself, described as "talking points," was contained in a letter to Prime Minister Begin, and its actual contents received scant attention in the media.

Its central feature is that it lays down what the outcome should be of the "negotiations" it urges upon the parties to the conflict; and its striking new conclusion is that Judea and Samaria (referred to, of course, as the "West Bank") must be handed over to the Arabs. This new conclusion has been thrown at our heads incessantly for the last 15 years.

The surrender must not be carried out all at once. It will begin (during the transition period) "by the peaceful and orderly transfer of authority from Israel to the Palestinian inhabitants (*including the land and its resources subject to fair safeguards on water*)" (emphasis added).

This theme, a pre-emptive and absolute denial of the Jewish people's right to the heart of its homeland, pervades the whole document.

Meanwhile, during the transitional period, there must be a "real freeze" of settlements.

As to which Arabs should rule over Judea, Samaria and Gaza, the Reagan Plan expresses its opposition to a "Palestinian State." The region would have the status of autonomy within Jordanian sovereignty.

Having thus disposed of the "West Bank," the authors of the plan sense that something should be left for negotiation. They choose the "status of Jerusalem" (which Israel in July 1967 closed to negotiation); and the question of the actual borders. Here comes the humorous part (seldom absent from U.S. pronouncements on the Middle East).

"The U.S. position in these negotiations on the [Israeli] withdrawal," says the Plan, "will be significantly influenced by the extent and nature of the peace and security arrangements offered in return."

Obviously, then, if there is to be "full peace," then – total withdrawal, then only "partial" peace (whatever this gibberish may mean) will be offered. Mr. Reagan did however make his intention a little more precise in his speech. There he said (and has

since repeated) that there must be an “exchange of territory.” That is, if Israel retains a few additional square metres or kilometres in Judea or Samaria, it will have to agree to give up a similar area from within the Green Line. Is it this “territorial compromise” that had Shimon Peres gushing with good words about the Reagan Plan?

However, these frills in the Reagan Plan are no more than armchair babble. Its central proposition is not. When promotion, in an orchestrated campaign, is launched in the U.S. and is enveloped, as it will be, in cottonwoolly phrase about “negotiations” and “lasting peace” and other seductive notions, Israeli rejection of its semantic generosity will come under very heavy – perhaps unprecedentedly heavy – fire. Israel’s friends, Jewish and non-Jewish, will, as usual, remain unarmed, without ammunition to fight back and at best will find themselves on the apologetic defensive.

For no one has taken the trouble to explain – in tones and content and volume adequate to counter the force of the American establishment and media propaganda – that the Reagan Plan is merely the most up-to-date version of the entrenched State Department doctrine that Israel must be squeezed back into the 1949 Armistice lines. That doctrine is the basis of the Arab dream about their final assault on the “Zionist entity.”