

January 15, 1993

FALSE HISTORY, PHONEY PEACE

CELEBRATED recently was an anniversary which reflects the success of one of the great hoaxes of the century. It is supposed to commemorate the opening on January 1, 1964, of the struggle of a homeless "Palestinian people" to regain its homeland. In fact it was nothing of the sort - and it is the date itself which exposes the hoax.

On January 1, 1964, when the PLO was founded, the area in which it now clamors for a separate "Palestinian state" was in fact part of a Palestinian state, ruled by an Arab king, Hussein of Jordan. Yet it was not against Hussein that the PLO rose. The Arabs of Western Palestine indeed never opposed the annexation of Judea and Samaria by Hussein's grandfather Abdallah.

They had accepted with equanimity the April 24, 1950 annexation as proclaimed by the Jordanian parliament and based on "the right of self-determination and the existing de facto position between Jordan and Palestine and their national, natural and geographic unity." They saw themselves as citizens of the kingdom of Jordan. It was against Israel in its narrow confines that the PLO declared war; and its declared purpose was the destruction of the Jewish State and its replacement by a "Palestinian" state. In the PLO "constitution," the Palestinian Covenant, adopted in June 1964, no fewer than 11 of its 22 clauses call for the elimination of Israel.

Three years later, in June 1967, Egypt, Syria and Jordan undertook that task themselves, and launched what came to be the Six Day War. After Israel repelled that attack and regained the historic heart of the Jewish homeland, the Arabs opened their major campaign to persuade the world that Palestine was not the Jewish homeland but an Arab, specifically a Palestinian Arab, country. For such a claim, a supporting historical background was necessary.

As no such Palestinian history existed, they simply sat down and compiled one - a complete creation unrelated to any known facts. Here is a sample: "Arab people were engaged in farming and building, spreading culture throughout the land for thousands of years, setting an example in the practice of freedom of worship, acting as faithful guardians of the holy places of all nations." This concoction, every word a lie, every line a bad joke, was uttered unblushingly by PLO chief Yasser Arafat in November 1974. He was referring to a Palestine whose near desolation, right up to the time of Zionist reconstruction, had been described by a succession of famous travelers, notably (in the 19th century) by such writers as Mark Twain and Alphonse de Lamartine.

From the monumental History of the Arabs by the 20th-century Arab historian, Philip K. Hitti, one learns how minuscule was the part played by Palestine in that history. Professor Hitti himself, testifying in 1946 to the Anglo-American Enquiry Commission, waxed indignant at the very use of the term "Palestine." "Palestine does not exist in history," he said.

"Absolutely not." Zionist leader David Ben-Gurion expressed his agreement. Arab history, he said, was made in Arabia, in Persia, in Spain and North Africa. "You will not find Palestine in that history lands." Thereafter, Egypt ignored almost every obligation it assumed in the various spin-off agreements under the peace treaty with Israel.

Egypt's behavior, however, is in accord with Moslem doctrine. Al Ghazzali, the great Moslem theologian, enunciated that doctrine in the 11th century: "Know that a lie is not haram [wrong] in itself, but only because of the evil conclusions to which it leads the hearer, making him believe something that is not really the case. If a lie is the only way of obtaining a good result, it is permissible.

"We must lie when truth leads to unpleasant results." Falsifying or fabricating history is thus also not a new Arab art. This is how Professor Hitti summed up this characteristic: "The Arabian genealogist, like his brother the Arab historian, had a horror vacui, and his fancy had no difficulty in bridging gaps and filling vacancies. In this way he has succeeded in giving us in most instances a continuous record from Adam or, in more modest compass, from Ishmael and Abraham." Hitti wrote this 60 years ago, and note how accurate is his description of what we read now in the texts of Arab propagandists and their dupes - like the nonsense included in the new Webster's Encyclopedia (exposed by Andrea Levin in The Jerusalem Post on October 31), or, earlier, in the National Geographic magazine, and elsewhere.

The Arabs have had phenomenal success in penetrating many minds with their fabricated history. True, this success derives in part from the predisposition of some people to antagonism toward Israel, and of some others to antisemitism. They have, however, succeeded also in influencing many people who are not at all unfriendly to Israel to conclude that there is something in the Arab claim to original ownership of Palestine - the fundamental lie in the whole Palestinian case.

For this a major share of the blame lies at the door of successive Israeli governments. They have simply failed to realize that in our peculiar circumstances it is vital to maintain a constant program of public education abroad. It is vital to disseminate the historic truth of the relationship between the Jewish people and its homeland and to keep an unsleeping watchfulness to counter the Arab campaign's burrowing under our very right to exist.

This years'-long neglect has been compounded now by the flourish of a "peace process" which is to answer all questions and silence all doubts. In fact, to the Arabs, the "peace process" is simply a process leading to the surrender of territory - and ultimately of sovereignty - by the Jewish people. They do not intend it to bring peace, except the kind of Arab peace envisaged on that January 1, 1964, whose anniversary was celebrated two weeks ago.