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KING HUSSEIN AS TEACHER

KING HUSSEIN is having the time of his life. A world-wide audience hangs on every word he utters. The U.S. government weighs his every thought, works hard to promote his interests, fights every inch of the way against congressional opposition in order to supply him with sophisticated arms (for use against Israel); and its experts twist and turn to satisfy his conditions for deigning to talk officially to the Israelis.

For years, Washington has searched for some semantic formula for meeting with Arafat – a born-again instant “moderate” – or his agents. After last February’s Hussein-Arafat agreement – reiterating the Arab code for Israel’s destruction – U.S. spokesmen (defining the agreement as a “peace move”) stooped to outright mendacity to *kasher* the PLO for negotiations. For example, they claimed that members of the Palestine National Council – the “parliament” of the PLO – were not PLO.

Overnight this quest has been suspended. The exposure of Arafat’s direct responsibility for the Achille Lauro hijack has compelled even the most fervent PLO supporters in the State Department to cross the PLO off the list of prospective negotiators.

This explains the switch by Washington to promote Hussein’s other condition for negotiations – the holding of an international conference. The Americans, who had earlier rejected out of hand the idea of an international conference, explain their present support with the terse assertion: “Hussein needs it.”

Of course Hussein “needs” it. An international conference (whatever its composition) will serve as a team cooperating to squeeze Israel into agreeing to hand over Judea, Samaria and Gaza to Arab rule.

THAT IS surely the most obvious reason why Israel should refuse unequivocally to have anything to do with such a conference. If there were any justification, in logic or morality, for inviting participation of parties uninvolved in the dispute (and no such justification exists), every one of the proposed invitees has long since lost any claim to Israel’s allowing them to take part.

All without exception – in violation of solemn pledges they gave in 1957 after the Sinai campaign – abandoned Israel facing the Arabs’ aggression. In 1973, all the Europeans denied even fuelling facilities to U.S. planes bringing supplies to a hard-pressed Israel. All, Europeans and Americans, with only semantic differences, support the Arab demand for Israeli surrender of Judea, Samaria and Gaza.

When the demand for an international conference was first articulated by Hussein (in concert with Arafat and Moscow), official Israeli reaction was indeed emphatically negative. Now, suddenly, the people of Israel learn of a retreat. Suddenly, it is revealed that the government has abandoned its commonsense and its self-respect: it has withdrawn its adamant objection to an international conference. At the UN, Prime Minister Peres propounded seven principles for negotiations. The fifth reads:

“If deemed necessary, these negotiations may be initiated with the support of an international forum, as agreed upon by the negotiating states.”

The degree of moral collapse is enhanced by the fatuous suggestion by Mr. Peres that Israel might agree to a role in negotiations even for the Soviet Union – if Moscow reestablishes diplomatic relations with Israel. For years, Israel maintained the rational and dignified stance that it is for the Soviets, who broke off relations (not to mention its inciting the Arabs to attack Israel), to take steps to resume them. Moreover, it was understood that Israel would not agree to resume relations as long as the Soviet Union persecuted its Jewish community.

But Hussein “needs” an international conference.

AT THE UN, Hussein scored another victory over Peres. It did not catch headlines – but its implications are more far-reaching.

In the past, the Arabs have enjoyed repeated success in the mindless embrace by so many Israelis (and others) of their semantic gimmicks – like the substitution of “West Bank” for Judea and Samaria, whereby the historic Jewish connection is erased and the idea implanted that Judea and Samaria are the natural Cis-Jordanian province of the Arab Hashemite kingdom.

Now, at the UN on September 27, in a speech replete with obfuscation and downright lying, Hussein made two particularly outrageous statements:

“Peace is an attribute of God,” he said. “Since 1967, in this spirit, the Arabs proceeded towards peace without success, while Israel, because of its victory then, has allowed its bent for expansion to take precedence over the desire for peace.”

This is the man who, not content with his predecessor’s rape of Western Palestine in 1948 – and the expansion of the Transjordanian kingdom into Judea and Samaria – ordered his own attack on Israel in 1967, ignoring the warnings of Israeli Premier Eshkol, in order to participate with Syria and Egypt in the destruction of the Jewish State and the massacre of its inhabitants. This very Hussein.

The very least the citizens of Israel might have expected from their elected champion in his UN address three weeks later was a factual exposure of the impertinent turning of history on its head. It was a vain expectation.

HUSSEIN went on to tell the UN General Assembly about Jerusalem. Without turning a hair he said, *inter alia*, “I look forward to a time when all the children of Abraham can proceed to their religious sites in the Holy Land in freedom and peace.”

This is the man who, in the years of his rule over the Old City of Jerusalem, not only violated the clause in the 1949 Armistice agreement enabling the Jewish “children of Abraham” to proceed to their religious sites, but ordered the systematic reduction to rubble of almost every Jewish religious site, and proceeded to the desecration of the ages-old Jewish cemetery on the Mount of Olives. This same Hussein.

The citizens of Israel might have expected from their national spokesman that he would expose Hussein’s humbug. They waited in vain. Nor did Peres reveal to his international audience that Hussein’s prayer for the future had already been answered. Under Israeli rule, and only under Israeli rule, have all the “children of Abraham” ever been able, and only under Israeli rule will they continue, to proceed to their religious sites in freedom and in peace – if Hussein and his colleagues do not once more disturb that peace.

IT WAS HERE that Mr. Peres compounded his omissions by an astonishing, and most disturbing, reaction – to Hussein’s invocation of “the children of Abraham.” The idea is now apparently creeping into the Arab propaganda to the West: the hint of a “common heritage.” The Jewish children of Abraham should give their share to the Arab children of Abraham. In a world of ignorance, even this nonsense may be swallowed.

Hussein, having suddenly invoked the Bible, should, however, have been informed at the earliest opportunity – specifically in Mr. Peres’ UN speech – that the Bible makes it clear, indeed emphasizes that there is no common heritage. The sons of Abraham received explicitly separate pledges from the Almighty. He gave Ishmael a very substantial blessing – in compensation for his exclusion from the Covenant – the famous Covenant in which God told Abraham: “Unto thy progeny have I given this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the river Euphrates” (Genesis 15:18).

Reassuring Abraham about the future of Ishmael, God said: “I will make him a great nation; but my Covenant will I establish with Isaac” (Genesis 17: 20-21).

Indeed the descendants of Ishmael, ruling today in sovereign power of 14 million square kilometers of territory in Africa and Asia, can have nothing to complain about – except their own greed.

Mr. Peres did not set the record straight on Hussein’s suppression of truth about the Arabs and on his lies about Israel. In this, his first appearance on the “world stage,” Peres left unchallenged the attack on his people – just as he and his colleagues remain silent at Hussein’s repeated, vicious onslaughts these very days.

More serious: in a sentence, he absolved the Arabs of half the guilt of their efforts to destroy the Jewish State. More serious still: he shifted half that guilt on to the shoulders of his own people. Evidently inspired by Hussein’s hypocritical reference to “the children of Abraham,” Peres explained the whole dispute to the world. He apologized.

“The sons of Abraham,” he said, “have become quarrelsome, but remain family nevertheless.”

This can no doubt be dismissed as mush; but on the lips of a politician ambitious to negotiate on the future of his people it is frightening mush.

Hussein has reason for self-congratulation on this achievement.