

**June 11, 2003**

## **MIDDLE EAST HISTORY FOR DUMMIES**

There is much talk of illegal occupation in this land. But the only illegal occupation of Judea, Samaria and the Jordan Valley in modern times was effected by Transjordan. When the Ottoman Empire collapsed in 1918 Britain was granted a Mandate by the League of Nations in 1922 as a trustee for the reconstitution of the Jewish National Home. This was the modern charter for the development of sovereignty for the Jewish people in its ancient homeland.

When, in 1947, the United Nations (successor to the League of Nations) recommended the partition of Palestine into two states, one Jewish, one Arab - thereby gifting the Arabs with a part of the Jewish heritage - the Jews consented, but the League of Arab States declared that it would not 'allow the creation of a Jewish State in Palestine.'

Consequently, in May 1948, the British having abandoned the Mandate, the Arab states launched their war for the annihilation of the infant Jewish state. They did not achieve the destruction of Israel, but Transjordan succeeded in capturing Judea, Samaria and the Jordan Valley, while Egypt captured the Gaza Strip. Transjordan went on to 'annex' the captured territories and was henceforth renamed 'Jordan.'

Jordan's rule lasted 19 years. Never during these years did the Arabs living in the annexed areas protest against the occupation, let alone rise up, declare themselves a separate nation or demand the territories for themselves. They peacefully accepted Jordanian citizenship.

True, after 16 years, the PLO was established in 1964 and carried out a number of terrorist acts - not against Jordan and its occupation but against Israel inside the narrow waist of the armistice lines of 1949.

THE LEADERS of the Arab League, whose original purpose in 1948 to destroy Israel had been frustrated, decided in 1967 to try again. A charismatic president, Gamal Abdel Nasser, had come to power in Egypt, and, having decided that the Arabs' strength was now 'sufficient' (as he said in a speech), he led the pan-Arab campaign for a new war. In May he took practical preliminary steps. He demanded that the UN Peace Observer team be removed from Sinai - which was done; and he closed the Tiran Straits, Israel's only gateway to the south and the east.

While concentrating his armed forces in Sinai, Nasser delivered a series of belligerent speeches describing the lethal aim of the impending war. On May 25, Cairo radio announced to the world: 'The Arab people is firmly resolved to wipe Israel off the map.' And on May 30, Nasser declared: 'The armies of Egypt, Jordan, Syria and Lebanon are stationed on the borders of Israel. Behind them stand the armies of Iraq, Algeria, Kuwait, Sudan and the whole of the Arab nation.'

Cheering crowds in the Arab capitals greeted the promise that Israel's end was nigh. The effect of this preparatory campaign was tremendous. Abba Eban, Israel's foreign minister, subsequently described in detail the international armament ready to attack Israel on three fronts: 'The greatest force ever assembled in that peninsula in all its history.'

'Nobody who lived through those days in Israel,' said Eban at the UN some days after the war, 'will ever forget the air of doom that hovered over our country.'

'Hemmed in by hostile armies ready to strike, affronted and beset by a flagrant act of war, bombarded day and night by predictions of her approaching extinction, forced into a total mobilization of all her manpower, her main supplies of vital fuel choked by a belligerent act, Israel faced the greatest peril of her existence that she had known since her resistance against aggression 19 years before at the hour of her birth' A crushing siege bore down upon us.'

Fear gripped the Diaspora. The notion of an assault on tiny Israel by the massed forces of the Arab nations was overwhelming. Young men rushed to get places on planes to Israel. In synagogues Jews gathered to pray for Israel's security. In Israel old men, women and children dug trenches in the parks and open spaces of the cities; hospitals were emptied of all but urgent cases in preparation for thousands of casualties.

Then, in six days, the Israeli forces won a great victory. In part of that victory Judea and Samaria, the Jordan Valley and the Gaza Strip were liberated from their Jordanian and Egyptian occupation.

The stunning victory was followed by an equally stunning offer by Israel - to hand back the liberated territories to the Arabs - in return for peace. The Arabs refused categorically. From a conference at Khartoum, they announced that there would be no peace, no negotiations and no recognition of Israel.

It was then, in the early seventies, that Jews came to live and build their homes in the wide acres of Judea, Samaria, the Gaza Strip and the Golan. They are the 'settlers' who have written a new and heroic chapter in the Zionist imperative of building the land; and their living where they are living is as legal and as natural as President George W. Bush living in Texas and Prime Minister Tony Blair in England.

THE MAKERS of the road map tried to impose a deleterious policy on Israel - and evidently, to our shame, succeeded without any discussion, precisely because they did not want to discuss the central historical facts - facts that expose the grotesque Arab fabrications on which rests the policy underlying the road map.

\* First, that the current 'dispute' between Israel and the Arabs began with murderous Arab terror in the 1920s and 1930s; that deliberate Arab military aggression brought on the war of 1948, and Arab terror continued during the decades that followed.

Throughout this whole period there were no 'settlers' in Judea and Samaria or Gaza; and when the Six Day War, which the Arabs pretend did not happen, was launched, there were no 'settlers.' The worldwide tumult about settlers being responsible for the conflict is simply a reflection of the grand hopes of the Arabs to evade responsibility for their lethal designs on Israel.

The mapmakers are thus collaborating in trying to make the hoax work.

\* Secondly, the Arabs have demonstrated, admit - even boast - and teach their children that they mean to get rid of Israel and that killing Jews is a virtue, a mitzva.

Once you ignore these damning facts you can construct any scenario you like. And if the scenario is conceived by a consortium of veteran friends of the Arabs (like Britain, other Europeans and the US State Department) and the UN, which harbors dyed-in-the-wool anti-Semites (see Durban), plus Saudi Arabia, then you are not creating a vision of peace but of the next war; a repetition, as the Arabs see it, of 1948.

The alternative may simply be a continuation of terror against Israel from behind the protective wall of the sovereignty of a Palestinian state.

THE ARABS have made it clear that the state they are now demanding represents the penultimate phase - so often referred to by Arafat - in the struggle for Israel's destruction. It's a state they could have had in 1947, under the UN Partition plan. They could surely have had a state when Israel offered to give back Judea, Samaria and the Gaza Strip in return for peace after the Six Day War. Their contemptuous rejection of the offer was an open declaration that peace with Israel was not their objective. The propaganda against Israel in the Arab world, indeed within the Muslim world, has since that time become more strident and more specific.

In the mosques, on the streets and in the schoolrooms they do not call for a state on the 'West Bank,' they call for a Palestinian State 'from the [Jordan] river to the [Mediterranean] sea.' Why do they prefer to fight and kill (and die) in order to gain sovereign possession of this sliver of Jewish territory? The answer seems to be that they cannot tolerate the idea that the Jews who lived in Muslim lands as third-class citizens are now treated as equals in human society. That is why the Arabs, when they have been defeated in war by Israel, insist that it is England or America that fought the war for them.

If the present policy of pressure on Israel - while the Arabs are cheering - is pressed to the end, the Bush vision will prove empty and the road map a lie.

And there will still be no peace.