

May 28, 1996

MISCHIEF BY OTHER MEANS

SHORTLY before he was assassinated, Yitzhak Rabin announced that the PLO would have to fulfill Yasser Arafat's undertaking to abrogate or amend the Palestinian Covenant within two months of the meeting of the Palestinian National Council. Otherwise, the "peace process" would be halted. What Rabin demanded has not taken place.

The covenant, which proclaims the coming destruction of Israel and the "dispersal" of its Jewish inhabitants, continues to exist. What the council decided was that the covenant would be amended which was no more than Arafat had promised two and a half years earlier. All that the PNC added was that a committee would be appointed to decide what clauses would be treated.

The only palpable consequence of that decision has been the weaving of a conspiracy to mislead the world in general and the Jews in particular, that the PLO has in fact amended or replaced the covenant, and thereby given up its intention to destroy Israel. The prime authors of the conspiracy are not the PLO, but the government. Prime Minister Peres actually hailed the decision as a historic breakthrough.

He only omitted to supply the text of the new or amended covenant. In the wake of this charade came an announcement from the US State Department that the administration subscribed to the conclusion that the covenant had in fact been amended. It thus proclaimed itself an accomplice in the conspiracy.

This is surely unprecedented even in the history of American intervention in Israel's internal affairs publishing a demonstrable lie, calculated to subvert Israel's democratic system, designed to help a specific candidate and incidentally add another coating of whitewash to the image of Yasser Arafat. But we should not, in all the clamor, lose our sense of perspective. Apart from demonstrating once more our government's proven capacity for mendacity and misdirection, the text of the Palestinian Covenant has lost any importance it may ever have had.

It is not the covenant that gave birth to the Arab purpose of eliminating the Jewish state. That purpose was alive before the covenant was compiled, and it remains alive. How, after Rabin's death, did Arafat respond to his threat to halt the "peace process" unless the covenant was altered? Choosing an audience of 40 Arab diplomats, he issued the stunning assurance that the doctrine of Israel's elimination was not being abandoned.

The only apparent novelty was the operational detail he envisaged for its consummation. "You understand," he said in his after-dinner speech in a Stockholm hotel "that we plan to eliminate the State of Israel and establish a purely Palestinian state... we will make living unbearable for Jews by psychological warfare, by population explosion." Jews would not want to live among the Palestinians, he prophesied; a million rich Jews would emigrate to America, others would be given compensation to leave... he emphasized the extreme importance of "deepening the rift in Israel's society which will lead to civil war," and promised that the PLO would make a major effort to achieve that purpose.

ARAFAT'S SPEECH suggests an already achieved defeat of the Jewish people. He imagines a cowardly mass flight from the land of Israel. But his vision derives from what he describes as hard facts.

There are three. Arafat declares that Peres and Beilin are "prepared to support a Palestinian state." This is not Arafat dreaming: What he reported in January has now been confirmed officially by the Labor party in May. In its election platform it has demonstratively dropped its opposition to a Palestinian state.

Arafat also claims that the Golan has already been given away, except for a few details. As far as the Labor government's intentions are concerned, that is the absolute truth. As for Jerusalem, he claims that Peres and Beilin have actually promised him "half" the city.

If this is not an exact truth, Arafat has enough grounds for believing that they will work to make it true. Otherwise, why have they allowed the "creeping annexation" by Arafat's numerous illicit agencies, beginning with Orient House and continuing with the activities of his Palestinian police in the city? What Arafat has manifestly grasped is that the Labor government behaves as though Israel is in fact a defeated people, unable to resist its enemies' demands. It fawns on them, "covering" for its misdeeds, collecting money for them, lying for them, trying to induce in its own Israeli people a spirit of surrender.

Not mere surrender. Listen to the speeches and read the writings of Shimon Peres, his allies and satellites. They are busy burying the Bible, and making a bonfire of 3,500 years of Jewish history.

They are preaching the abandonment of Jewish national identity, and envisage its dissolution into an amorphous new homeland called the Middle East. That is the spiritual content and essence of the so-called "peace process." Will Israel, indeed the Jewish people at large, summon the resolution to bring this lethal process to a halt?