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Monumental hoax

IN HIS recent address to the Young Leadership of the UJA, President Reagan seemed to have stumbled on a new truth. He mentioned that when, two weeks earlier, terrorists had planted hand grenades outside a store on a Jerusalem street and 21 people were injured, "Yasser Arafat, on behalf of the PLO, praised the attack on innocent civilians." He had the gall, added Reagan, "to call it a military operation."

This criticism of Arafat and the Palestine liberation Organization must surely have upset the pro-Arab stalwarts in his administration, who dominate U.S. policy. They do not relish any statement likely to point up the chronic failure of U.S. governments to face the realities of the Arab-Jewish conflict and indeed the realities of the Middle East altogether.

Arafat's "gall" is not a new phenomenon. New only is its apparently sudden revelation by an American president. His audience may well have recalled, in this Olympics year, the carefully planned murder by Arafat's emissaries of 11 Israeli sportsmen at the Munich games in 1972. That, too, was celebrated as a great military operation.

They might recall, too, the 1974 series of equally famous PLO exploits. Just ten years ago, shortly before dawn on April 11, PLO infiltrators from Lebanon went into Kiryat Shmona, penetrated apartments in two buildings, flung grenades and fired bursts from automatic weapons at the occupant families. By the time Israeli soldiers caught up with them, they had killed nine men and women and seven children, aged between two-and-a-half and 14. Sixteen men, women and children were wounded.

Even more impressive was the PLO achievement in the village of Ma'alot the next month. At three o'clock in the morning, terrorists woke up the residents in an apartment and shot a couple and their infant children (one of whom survived). They then crossed the road to a school where 100 children – on a hiking tour from Safad – were sleeping. They awakened them, herded them together in one room and held them hostage for 14 hours. When Israeli soldiers reached the building, the terrorists opened fire in that enclosed space; 84 of the children were hit. Twenty died. When the Arab states' foreign ministers met in conference later that year, Farouk Kadoumi, the leader of Arafat's delegation, described these events as "great operations of military heroism."

These were but examples of those years of PLO terror, and the perceptions of Arafat and his colleagues. Indeed what were the achievements that brought the PLO its fame in the world if not the spectacular attacks on innocent and unarmed civilians – with special attention to children?

THE SIGNIFICANCE of the history of the PLO, however, is much broader. It was not only its own leaders who boasted of PLO operations. Its murders were hailed with uniform enthusiasm throughout all the Arab states; and 1974, that vintage year for PLO terror, saw their energetic concentrated diplomatic campaign – which succeeded – to secure the invitation for Arafat to appear at the UN to address the world.

The PLO was never an independent organization created and maintained by a "Palestinian people." Its funds (which ultimately ran into astronomical figures) came from the Arab states, notably from Saudi Arabia. Before it established its own training

centres in Lebanon, and thus became the central source of “professional” preparation and inspiration for the terrorists of the whole world – European, Far Eastern and South American – it was itself provided with training facilities in the Arab states. Before it was recognized by Moscow as a useful client, deserving of large quantities of variegated arms (paid for by Saudi Arabia), the PLO had acquired its weapons from the Arab states.

The Arab states, at their conference in Rabat in October 1974, not only recognized the PLO formally as the “sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people,” but also pledged themselves to support it in all its undertakings.

THE ARABS have proved themselves superb propagandists. During the Six Day War they realized that it was not palatable for Western tastes that the great Arab nation, occupying its many states and tremendous territories (ultimately, some 14 million square kilometres), rich beyond all their dreams in resources indisposable to the modern world, should be conducting a war of annihilation against the tiny Jewish State.

They consequently launched a universal campaign of indoctrination to make it appear that the dispute was really between an aggressive (and illegitimate) Jewish State and a poor, homeless, “Palestinian people.” Their tactic was understandable. After all, they knew the facts on the ground. The territory they insist Israel should return to Arab hands *was in Arab hands* when they attacked Israel – in 1967, as in 1948. After all, the PLO, whose alleged longing for the “West Bank” was uncontrollable, was formed precisely in the period when the “West Bank” was in fact in Arab hands – in 1964 – and it directed its activities against Israel within the Armistice lines.

These guilty facts needed to be smothered by the protection of a so-called “Palestinian problem.” Smothered essentially was the central fact that the PLO is not a liberation movement at all. It is an anti-liberation movement, aiming at the eradication of the Jewish homeland and its people.

American administrations, for reasons of their own, have promoted this monumental hoax, and – if one may use the language employed by President Reagan – they have the gall to try to sell it to its intended victims: the Jewish people. Moreover they try to foist on Israel the image of the PLO as a perfectly normal political organization with acceptable aims, with whom it would be desirable and reasonable to negotiate if only Yasser Arafat could be persuaded to mouth some kind of formula accepting Security Council resolutions.

THAT IS not all. The image of the homeless Palestinian people – which has captured the imagination of so many people throughout the world and has been promoted unblushingly by Western statesmen kowtowing to the dictates of the Saudi (and other) oil princes and petrodollar purveyors – suffers its daily exposure as a pure fiction by the very existence of Jordan. The Kingdom of Jordan is in fact the eastern part of Palestine. It occupies three-quarters of the territory originally designated by the world’s nations to “reconstitute” the Jewish national home, and handed in trust to Britain after World War I precisely because it had undertaken to facilitate fulfillment of that purpose. The British compounded their initial perfidy of presenting Transjordan to the Hedjazi prince Abdallah by aiding and abetting him in his attempt in 1948 to gain control, by war, of Western Palestine as well.

American administrations (and other promoters of the idea of a “homeless Palestinian people”) have ignored the admittedly embarrassing fact that the PLO itself insists that the Palestine that belongs to the “Palestinian people” includes Transjordan, that is Jordan. What could be more “homeless” than a people which controls 90,000 square kilometres of land?

There is indeed a Palestine problem. It is the problem of the Arabs in their frustration at not having succeeded thus far in erasing the “intruder” Jewish State from “the heart of the Arab world” and in their continuing expectation of achieving their end, whether by war, by diplomacy or by the fomenting of internal dissension in Israel.

ARAB GALL then is related not only to the depiction of murder as heroism. It is the central feature of the entire Arab claim to Palestine. It is wonderfully exemplified by the claim of Jordan, the east Palestinian state, to legitimize its 1948 rape of Western Palestine and incidentally to erase from public memory its attempt to finish the job in 1967.

Ye the U.S. persists in its support of that legitimization. It presses Israel not only to negotiate with Jordan, but indeed to guarantee in advance acceptance of King Hussein’s demand for the return of Judea and Samaria to his control. That after all is the heart and soul of the Reagan Plan.

True, one cannot blame only Washington. The fierce desire for peace in Israel has given birth to defeatist ideas and flabby diplomacy, which have helped bolster the myth that appeasement and concessions are (in spite of bitter past experience) a feasible basis for peace. In fact, if the Reagan Plan were consummated, Jordan would become a full partner with the other Arab states in planning the next stage in ridding the world of the Jewish State – and thus, as a galling by-product, in eliminating American influence in the Middle East.