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THE PLO IS BEING TRUTHFUL

THE late Neville Chamberlain made at least one momentous statement which ought to be included in every compendium of political thought. As he lay dying, in December 1940, at the height of the German bombing blitz, he exclaimed: "Everything would have been alright if Hitler hadn't lied to me." An echo of Chamberlain's assessment was sounded off several years ago by an Israeli novelist, famous for intense sympathy for the Palestinian Arabs and for his propagation of the idea of "Israeli guilt." He told a Los Angeles audience several years ago: "In private conversations with prominent Palestinians in Europe and the administered territories, I have learned to my sorrow that often the same people who privately, in English, over a cup of coffee in London or Paris, talk sense, repeat the wildest ideas of the PLO about the need to exterminate Israel the very next day in a speech to their own people." "To my regret," Amos Oz went on, "I have learned over the years that the statements they make in Arabic are a thousand times more important than what they are likely to whisper in the ears of people who are eager for peace." He confessed that the "Palestinians' obstinacy" made it difficult for him to persist in his "dovish" views or to disseminate them (Ha'aretz, January 28, 1985). Evidently, Oz has managed to overcome his difficulty, for he has remained a faithful spokesman for the ideas of the Peace Now school.

Yet, lo and behold, his warm welcome of the government's headlong rush to surrender to Arab demands is tempered by a nagging counterpoint of doubt and mistrust. "Clearly," he writes ("From battles to bridges," September 3), "the Palestinians are going to get parts of the land, whereas we will get documents and promises coalition - to protect what would then be the "remnant of Israel." Israel is entering into an agreement with a terrorist organization which has proved to be the worst enemy of the Jewish people since the Nazis. Leader Arafat has specialized in ordering the murder of helpless people, including non-Jews whose murder served his purpose, like the killing of the American diplomats, tied to their chairs, in Khartoum.

Ma'alot of the machine-gunned schoolchildren, Munich of the Olympic sportsmen - a host of names and places come to mind. Murder after murder, all presided over by Arafat. In deference to public opinion, the US government refused to maintain contact with the PLO.

In Israel's astonishing policy of surrender, the US now sees the prospect, long-desired in Washington, of its being squeezed back into the indefensible Armistice lines of 1949. The US consequently embraced Arafat with zest. The charade on the lawn of the White House was an elaborate piece of obfuscation, designed to bluff Israel and its friends into the illusion that what was being signed between Israel and the PLO was a "sacred international agreement." It is nothing of the sort.

It is an agreement between sovereign Israel and a private organization which has never tested its numerical strength in an election, whose leader was never elected by anybody. Nor indeed did Rabin even obtain a mandate to negotiate with the PLO. On the contrary, his mandate includes an injunction to the contrary.

Only a few weeks ago, he was uttering assurances that he would never negotiate with

the PLO. This agreement was born in sin and reeks of it. It endangers Israel's very existence.