

Message Text

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INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN
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AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
AMEMBASSY JIDDA
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

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E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, SY, US, EG, JO, PLO, XF

SUBJECT: IS PEACE ACHIEVABLE? A VIEW FROM JERUSALEM

SUMMARY: AS SEEN FROM JERUSALEM, THE ARAB CONFRONTATION STATES FOR THEIR OWN REASONS CURRENTLY APPEAR WILLING TO RECOGNIZE ISRAEL'S LEGITIMACY BY ENTERING INTO A PEACE AGREEMENT IN EXCHANGE FOR ISRAEL'S WITHDRAWAL FROM MOST TERRITORY OCCUPIED IN 1967 AND THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A PALESTINIAN ENTITY IN THE WEST BANK/GAZA. ISRAEL, WHILE ARTICULATING A DESIRE FOR PEACE, HARBORS DEEP SUSPICIONS OF ITS ARAB NEIGHBORS AND ADAMANTLY REJECTS THE PLO. FOR ITS PART, THE PLO APPEARS WEAKENED AND DISORGANIZED. THE WEST BANKERS AND GAZANS SUPPORT THE PLO BUT HAVE NO EFFECTIVE WAY OF PARTICIPATING IN THE POLITICAL LIFE OF THE REGION. IN THESE CIRCUMSTANCES, IF ISRAEL CAN

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BE INDUCED TO RUN SOME RISKS IN THE PURSUIT OF PEACE AND IF "PALESTINIAN INTERESTS" CAN BE MET SUFFICIENTLY THROUGH THE CREATION OF A PALESTINIAN ENTITY ON THE WEST BANK/ EAST JERUSALEM AND GAZA, A REAL POSSIBILITY FOR PEACE EXISTS. THE COMPLICATED AND INTERRELATED PROBLEMS OF PEACE, WITHDRAWAL, SECURITY, A PALESTINIAN ENTITY, AND THE FUTURE OF THE PLO, WHILE TRULY FORMIDABLE, DO NOT APPEAR

INHERENTLY INSOLUBLE. END SUMMARY.

1. THESE OBSERVATIONS ARE FROM THE VANTAGE POINT OF A POST LOCATED AT THE HEART OF THE TERRITORIAL ISSUE OF THE ARAB/ISRAELI CONFLICT WHICH IS ALSO AT THE INTERFACE BETWEEN THE ISRAELI AND ARAB WORLDS. BECAUSE WE ARE NOT ACCREDITED TO ANYONE, WE HAVE THE LUXURY OF SUGGESTING POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS WITHOUT HAVING TO DELIVER ANY GOVERNMENT OR GROUP. (THIS MESSAGE WAS DISCUSSED WITH EMBASSY TEL AVIV BUT THE CONTENTS ARE THE PRINCIPAL OFFICER'S RESPONSIBILITY ALONE.) ONE IRONY IN THE PRESENT SITUATION IS THAT THE POPE OF THE WEST BANK/EAST JERUSALEM AND GAZA, WHOSE FUTURE IS THE SUBJECT OF SO MUCH ANALYSIS AND DEBATE, HAVE LITTLE POLITICAL INFRASTRUCTURE AND VERY LIMITED MEANS FOR MAKING THEIR VIEWS KNOWN. THE POSSIBILITY EXISTS THAT THE FUTURE OF THE WEST/BANK/GAZA WILL BE DECIDED WITHOUT ANY EFFECTIVE PARTICIPATION IN THE DECISION-MAKING PROCESS BY THE PEOPLE MOST CONCERNED.

2. ISRAEL HAS CONSISTENTLY MAINTAINED THAT IT WILL NOT ACCEPT AN INDEPENDENT STATE BETWEEN ITSELF AND JORDAN AND HAS ASSERTED THAT "THE PALESTINIAN PROBLEM" MUST BE SOLVED IN NEGOTIATIONS WITH JORDAN (PRESUMABLY THIS MEANS THAT ISRAEL WOULD NEGOTIATE WITH HUSSEIN OVER THE WEST BANK, THAT THE PLO AS SUCH WOULD BE EXCLUDED AND THAT OTHER, "GOOD", PALESTINIANS FROM THE WEST BANK ACCEPTABLE TO ISRAEL AND HUSSEIN COULD BE ASSOCIATED WITH THE NEGOTIATING PROCESS.) THIS IMPLIES A RETURN OF THE WEST BANK TO JORDAN OR A LESS-THAN-INDEPENDENT
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PALESTINIAN ENTITY LINKED TO JORDAN UNDER EFFECTIVE GUARANTEES ASSURING DEMILITARIZATION AND NON-INDEPENDENCE. SADAT, ASSAD AND HUSSEIN HAVE ALL SPOKEN OF A POSSIBLE LINK BETWEEN A PALESTINIAN ENTITY AND JORDAN. WEST BANKERS ASSERT THAT SUCH A LINK COULD BE ESTABLISHED ONLY AFTER AN INDEPENDENT PALESTINIAN STATE HAD BEEN CREATED AND THAT NEGOTIATIONS BETWEEN PALESTINE AND JORDAN WOULD BE ON THE BASIS OF FORMAL EQUALITY. FAHMY, ON THE OTHER HAND, HAS HINTED THAT THE REQUIREMENTS OF ISRAEL FOR SECURITY AND THE PALESTINIANS FOR LEGITIMACY MIGHT BE MET BY THE SIMULTANEOUS ESTABLISHMENT OF AN ENTITY AND ITS ASSOCIATION WITH JORDAN. TO THE CONSTERNATION OF ITS SUPPORTERS ON THE WEST BANK, THE PLO'S REACTION TO THESE DEVELOPMENTS HAS BEEN TO START A DIALOGUE WITH HUSSEIN.

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3. EVEN IF THE PNC WERE TO REVISE THE CONVENIENT TO THE EXTENT OF STATING THE PLO'S READINESS TO ACCEPT ISRAEL WITHIN ITS 1967 BORDERS IN EXCHANGE FOR PEACE, MOST FOREIGN OBSERVERS HERE BELIEVE IT IS INCONCEIVABLE ANY ISRAELI LEADER COULD ACCEPT A PALESTINIAN ENTITY (EVEN ONE LINKED TO JORDAN) WITH ARAFAT AT THE HEAD OF IT. IF ARAFAT AND OTHER PLO LEADERS PUBLICLY ASSOCIATED WITH TERRORISM COULD BE EASED ASIDE, A PURGED PLO LEADERSHIP ACCEPTABLE TO ISRAEL AS PART OF JORDAN'S DELEGATION MIGHT BE ABLE TO PARTICIPATE IN NEGOTIATIONS ALONG WITH PALESTINIANS FROM THE WEST BANK. WHILE UNDER CERTAIN CIRCUMSTANCES ISRAEL MIGHT BE PERSUADED IT IS IN ITS INTEREST TO WITHDRAW FROM MOST OF THE WEST BANK, ACCEPTANCE OF SUCH A TRAUMATIC STEP COULD NOT INCLUDE THE ACCEPTANCE OF AN ARAFAT TOO.

4. A MAJORITY OF WEST BANKERS UPPORT THE PLO AND ITS PRESENT LEADERSHIP. THIS IS REFLECTED IN THE WEST BANK MAYORS ELECTED IN THE SPRING OF 1976 AS WELL AS IN THEIR FEBRUARY 10 LETTER TO WALDHEIM. THIS SITUATION IS NOT TO BE THE LIKING OF EITHER

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ISRAEL OR JORDAN AND, AS A RESULT, THE WEST BANK MAYORS HAVE BEEN IGNORED AND HUMILITATED BY BOTH THE GOI AND HUSSEIN. THERE IS A SMALL GROUP OF WEST BANKERS, MANY OF WHOM HELD HIGH POSITIONS DURING THE JORDANIAN ADMINISTRATION FROM 1950-

1967, WHO FAVOR A RETURN TO HASHEMITE RULE. EVEN THOUGH A MAJORITY OF WEST BANKERS ARE ANTIPATHEITIC TO SUCH A DEVELOPMENT, THIS SITUATION COULD CHANGE IF THEY WERE TO BE CONFRONTED WITH THE CHOICE OF INDEFINITE ISRAELI OCCUPATION OR BECOMING PART OF JORDAN.

5. AS TO WITHDRAWAL, A MAJORITY OF WEST BANKERS SUPPORT THE POSITION OF THE CONFRONTATION STATES OF WITHDRAWAL TO THE 1967 LINES. THIS IS BASED IN PART ON A REALIZATION THAT ISRAEL IS NOT GOING TO DISAPPEAR AND IN PART ON FRUSTRATIONS OF 9 1/2 YEARS OF OCCUPATION. EFFORTS BY THE PRO-PLO MAYOR OF RAMALLAH TO REDUCE THIS POSITION INTO WRITING HAS RUN INTO DIFFICULTIES. IN THE FEBRUARY 10 LETTER TO WALDHEIM THE WEST BANK MAYORS CALLED FOR "IMPLEMENTATION OF THE UN RESOLUTIONS CALLING FOR THE WITHDRAWAL OF ISRAELI OCCUPATION FORCES FROM OUR HOMELAND AND THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE NUCLEUS OF AN INDEPENDENT PALESTINIAN STATE ON THIS LAND AND IN THIS COUNTRY".

6. THE HEART OF THE TERRITORIAL PROBLEM IS, OF COURSE, EAST JERUSALEM. WEST BANKERS OF ALL POLITICAL PERSUASIONS MAINTAIN THAT THERE MUST BE TOTAL WITHDRAWAL TO THE 1967 LINES BUT STOP SHORT OF DEMANDING THAT THE CITY BE REDIVIDED PHYSICALLY. THERE WILL HERE, AS ELSEWHERE, HAVE TO BE TERRITORIAL ADJUSTMENTS. IT IS CONCEIVABLE THAT A COMPROMISE COULD BE FOUND IN A BOROUGH SYSTEM WHICH WOULD RESULT IN EAST JERUSALEM (EXCLUSIVE OF ZION GATE, THE JEWISH QUARTERS AND THE WESTERN WALL) UNDER ARAB CONTROL, WITH THE EXCEPTION OF THE TEMPLE MOUNT. HERE, SOME FORM OF JOINT SOVEREIGNTY MIGHT BE DEVISED WHICH WOULD, IN EFFECT, PERPETUATE THE STATUS QUO IN REGARD TO THIS AREA. INTERNATIONALIZATION APPEARS UNACCEPTABLE. THE LARGE ISRAELI HOUSING DEVELOPMENTS BUILT IN EAST JERUSALEM SINCE 1967 WOULD

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POSE A DIFFICULT PROBLEM BUT NOT OF THE EMOTIONAL MAGNITUDE OF THE OLD (WALLED) CITY WHICH MANY ARABS AND JEWS CONSIDER TO BE SYNONYMOUS WITH JERUSALEM.

7. AGREEMENT ON JERUSALEM COULD BE ACHIEVED (IF AT ALL) ONLY WITH GREAT DIFFICULTY PROVIDED EVERYTHING ELSE IN A PEACE AGREEMENT HAD ALREADY BEEN AGREED UPON AND THE ENTIRE PACKAGE DEPENDED ON THE RESOLUTION OF THIS FINAL POINT. BECAUSE ISRAEL MAINTAINS THAT JERUSALEM IS NOT NEGOTIABLE, THE NEGOTIATING FRAMEWORK AND AGENDA SHOULD BE FLEXIBLE ENOUGH SO THAT IT EVENTUALLY COULD BE INCLUDED BUT IT WOULD PROBABLY BE COUNTER PRODUCTIVE SPECIFICALLY TO TRY TO INCLUDE JERUSALEM AT THE OUTSET.

8. ON THE WEST BANK, THE ARABS WILL INSIST ON PULLBACK TO THE 1967 LINES WITH MINOR RECTIFICATIONS. ONE OF THE MAJOR TERRITORIAL ADJUSTMENTS WOULD PRESUMABLY OCCUR IN THE REGION

OF THE ETZION BLOC, SOUTH OF BETHLEHEM, WHICH EVEN ISRAELI DOVES AND PRIME MINISTER RABIN MAINTAIN MUST BE A PART OF ISRAEL IN A SETTLEMENT. (RABIN MADE A SIMILAR STATEMENT ABOUT RAFAH IN THE SOUTH GAZA STRIP.)

9. THE HARDER AND MORE INTRACTABLE PROBLEM IS THAT OF THE 30-ODD ISRAELI SETTLEMENTS IN THE WEST BANK. REMOVAL OF SETTLEMENTS SUCH AS KIRYAT ARBA NEAR HEBRON AND QADOUM NEAR NABLUS WOULD PROVOKE GREAT OPPOSITION ON THE PART OF ULTRA-RELIGIOUS ELEMENTS. WEST BANKERS INSISTS THAT ALL ISRAELI SETTLEMENTS ESTABLISHED SINCE 1967 WOULD HAVE TO BE EVACUATED SINCE PALESTINIANS WILL NOT BE ABLE TO RETURN TO THEIR HOMES IN PRE-1949 ISRAEL. INDEED, AS LONG AS SOME JEWISH SETTLEMENTS WERE TO REMAIN THERE WOULD BE THE CONSTANT DANGER OF A HEBRON-STYLE MASSACRE BY REJECTIONIST ELEMENTS BEN ON FRUSTRATING THE AGREEMENT.

10. ANOTHER DIFFICULT PROBLEM WOULD BE THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A LAND CORRIDOR LINKING GAZA AND THE WEST BANK. WHILE ISRAEL MIGHT BE PREPARED TO PERMIT TRANSIT OVER A SPECIFIED ROUTE,
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IT IS HARD TO ENVISAGE ISRAEL AGREEING TO A LAND CORRIDOR ACROSS PRE-1967 ISRAEL WHICH WOULD BE UNDER ARAB CONTROL. (OBVIOUSLY, THE VULNERABILITY OF SUCH A LINK TO ISRAELI DISRUPTION WOULD BE ONE OF THE GUARANTEES THAT THE ENTITY WOULD LIVE UP TO THE TERMS OF THE PEACE AGREEMENT.)

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11. ON THE QUESTION OF VIABILITY, THE ANSWER IS HEAVILY DEPENDENT UPON WHAT KIND OF PALESTINIAN ENTITY IS SET UP AND ITS RELATIONS WITH ISRAEL, JORDAN AND THE ARAB WORLD. AMONG THE ISSUES WHICH WOULD HAVE TO BE SOLVED ARE: PALESTINIAN DAY LABOR IN ISRAEL; A LARGE NUMBER OF WEST BANK/GAZA PALESTINIANS NOW LIVING IN UNRWA CAMPS; AND HOW MANY OF THE 1,400,000 PALESTINIANS LIVING ON THE EAST BANK, SYRIA AND LEBANON WOULD SEEK TO MIGRATE TO THE NEW ENTITY.

12. SECURITY

WITH OR WITHOUT AN AGREEMENT, ISRAEL'S SECURITY FOR THE NEXT FEW YEARS WILL PRESUMABLY BE ITS OVERALL TECHNOLOGICAL SUPERIORITY IN RELATION TO ANY COMBINATION OF ITS NEIGHBORS. ALTHOUGH A WEST BANK ENTITY IS REGULARLY CHARACTERIZED AS "A DAGGER" AT ISRAEL'S HEART, THIS PROBLEM COULD BE MET BY GUARANTEED DEMILITARIZATION. IN THE EVENT OF A PEACE AGREEMENT, ARABS AS WELL AS OTHER STATES WOULD HAVE POLITICAL JUSTIFICATION FOR CRACKING DOWN ON REJECTIONIST AND TERRORISTS. WERE THE
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AGREEMENT TO BE VIOLATED, ISRAEL WOULD HAVE THE MILITARY CAPABILITY OF TAKING APPROPRIATE REMEDIAL ACTION. IT IS DIFFICULT TO ENVISAGE THE ARABS ACCEPTING THE ALLON PLAN OR A VARIATION OF IT WHEREBY SIZEABLE ISRAELI UNITS WOULD REMAIN IN THE JORDAN VALLEY AFTER THE SIGNATURE OF AN AGREEMENT.

13. CONCLUSION

IN SUM, THE PROBLEMS ASSOCIATED WITH PEACE, WITHDRAWAL, SECURE AND RECOGNIZED BORDERS, SECURITY AND PALESTINIAN INTERESTS (INCLUDING VIABILITY OF A PALESTINIAN ENTITY) DO NOT APPEAR TO BE INHERENTLY INSOLUBLE. IN ACTUAL PRACTICE, THEY MAY WELL TURN OUT TO BE MORE THAN THE COMBINED POLITICAL WILL OF ISRAEL, THE ARABS, THE US AND THE REST OF THE WORLD CAN OVERCOME. HOWEVER, THIS IS NO REASON NOT TO MAKE A CONCERTED, EVEN HEROIC, EFFORT TO OVERCOME THEM. IF A SOLUTION IS NOT FOUND, THEN THE FUTURE HOLDS SUFFERING AND GREAT DANGER FOR ISRAEL, THE ARABS, AND THE INDUSTRIAL DEMOCRACIES, FIRST AND FOREMOST THE U.S. NEWLIN

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