

**ARAFAT'S 'UTOPIAN' DREAM FADES**

NEW YORK (WUP) -- "The recent sectarian fighting in Lebanon points to the illusory nature of Yasir Arafat's proposed political solution of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict."

Thus declared Brooklyn's Bernard Firestone in a letter published in The New York Times last week.

"Assuming that Arafat is indeed sincere in his dream of a multinational state in which Arabs and Jews would share power," Mr. Firestone notes further, "the record of multinational sharing of power is bleak as to make his dream, if realized, a nightmare. Indeed, in most cases where significant ethnic or other cleavages exist in society, one group generally dominates the political, economic and social spheres



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at the expense of the other(s)."

Bernard Firestone continues: "The attractiveness of the PLO political proposal to 'enlightened' circles in the West and the concomitant frustration with Israel's adamancy is endemic of a way of thinking which can only be called 'utopian - rationalism'.

By expecting actors on the international stage to behave rationally and reasonably, thereby ignoring years of accumulated psychological baggage on the part of the antagonists, the 'utopian-rationalists' wish away realities that are not prescribed by standards of rational behavior. In so doing, they ignore both historical and contemporary evidence to the contrary and thus indulge in fanciful, if not utopian, thought."

Firestone goes on to say that "it is not surprising, therefore, that the wider implications of the tragic Lebanese crisis are ignored in the West. Since sectarian strife is dissonant with standards of rational behavior, it is viewed as an isolated phenomenon, an aberration. In fact, however, Lebanon represents the rule rather than the exception.

"To expect a similar situation to be successful in Palestine where resentments and hatred are all the greater and not mitigated by any nationalist bonds," Firestone concludes, "is to engage in pure fantasy."

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