

Israel Calls On Hussein: Negotiate Without PLO

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they take the opportunity, take their fate into their own hands?"

Hussein, in a 3-1/2 hour television address to the Jordanian people expressed in unambiguous terms his frustration with the PLO and its leader, Yasir Arafat. "I and the government of the Kingdom of Jordan announce that we are unable to continue to coordinate politically with the PLO leadership until such time as their word becomes their bond, characterized by commitment, credibility and constancy," Hussein said.

Peres warned the Palestinians that "To follow the PLO is to go nowhere and get nowhere. They'll kill a few more people, a little more terrorism. But basically they're killing their own future." The Premier said Hussein's announcement came as "no surprise to me...Two weeks ago I saw already that the Hussein-Arafat talks were a total failure. The public rift between Hussein and the PLO is "something to rejoice over," he added.

Rabin stressed in his television appearance that he spoke "as Minister of Defense, the man in charge of the territories, in appealing to the Palestinians in the territories to come forward and together with Hussein, negotiate with Israel." He called Hussein's speech "an opening to peace.

Rabin observed, "If only five or six West Bank figures would rise up and take up the leadership call, realizing that the PLO has consistently foiled peace efforts, this would bring a breakthrough. What are they waiting for? A miracle? Here is a golden opportunity," Rabin declared. In private conversations later he said West Bank Palestinian leaders will have to admit the PLO has led them into a dead end. "I hope they will come forward now and say this publicly and move ahead without the PLO," he said.

The off-and-on negotiations between Hussein and Arafat, encouraged by the United States, during the past year, and similar contacts over the last few years were aimed at finding a formula by which Jordan and the PLO could negotiate with Israel in behalf of the Palestinian people. The PLO could negotiate with Israel in behalf of the Palestinian people. A minimal condition, insisted on by Israel and the U.S., was PLO acceptance of United Nations Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338 which would imply recognition of Israel and renunciation of terrorism.

Hussein said he told Arafat last October that he needed a written agreement to the American conditions. "Hinging on this agreement, of course, was an immediate opening of an American-Palestine dialogue on the basis of which we would have continued our efforts for convening an international peace conference, to which the PLO would be invited to participate as a representative of the Palestinian people," Hussein said. "But our brethren in the Palestinian leadership surprised us by refusing to accept Security Council Resolution 242" even though American assurances "met the PLO's requirements" and "reflected a significant change in the United States position" by accepting a PLO role in peace talks, Hussein said. "Thus came to an end another chapter in the search for peace," the Jordanian monarch declared.

Yet Hussein's speech was not "a final divorce" from the PLO, but rather "a move designed to challenge the PLO's claim to exclusive representation of the Palestinians," according to Tel Aviv University's Prof. Asher Susser, a leading Israeli political analyst.

"He does not want to slam the door completely on the PLO, but he wants to create new conditions in which cooperation with the PLO, together with forces from inside the territories, would erode the PLO's exclusivity," Susser said.

He noted that Hussein, in fact, reaffirmed Jordan's acceptance of the 1947 Arab League summit conference decision in Rabat, Morocco, that

Is Hussein Moving Toward Peace?

By Kenneth Jacobson

(Mr. Jacobson is director of the Middle Eastern Affairs Department of the Anti-Defamation League's International Affairs Division.)

Over the past 37 years there have been numerous reports about breakthroughs in settling the Arab-Israeli conflict. Only one -- Anwar Sadat's peace initiative -- was genuine.

Now again, diplomatic circles are alive with stories of movement. Are we to be disappointed once again? Are the reports a reflection of real change or propaganda rampant?

There is cause to conclude that something is going on and that it is serious.

The underlying factor for continued Arab refusal to deal with or make peace with Israel has been the notion that time is on the side of the Arabs. They could lose one war, two wars, four wars to Israel, but eventually they would swamp the Jews. So no need to do what they didn't want to do in the first place: recognize Israel.

In recent years, however, King Hussein's perception of the meaning of time has changed. No longer does he see the status quo of Arab rejectionism as simply working to the benefit of the Arabs. He looks at the West Bank and sees Israel entrenching itself more deeply -- physically and psychologically -- year by year. The longer nothing is done on the diplomatic front, the greater Israel's hold on the region. And the greater Israel's hold, the more the chance that large numbers of Palestinians living there will opt to leave.

With the oil wealth of the Persian Gulf drying up and no longer serving as a magnet, the logical place for the masses of Palestinians to go is into Jordan. Today, the King worries about a Palestinian population which constitutes 60 percent of his state. Add another 600,000 - 700,000 Palestinians and the percentage rises to some 75 percent. The threat to his regime is self-evident.

This new reality (or new perception of reality, because one really can't predict what will happen to the Palestinians living on the West Bank) has created a dynamic in Jordanian policymaking. One of its earliest manifestations was in April, 1983, when the Jordanian cabinet announced it was unwilling to join the Reagan peace initiative of September, 1982. The cabinet explained that it gave serious consideration to the plan in the first place because of the recognition that time was running out as Israel continued to settle the area.

The irony of this development cannot go unmentioned. Successive American administrations have labeled Israeli settlements as an obstacle to peace. Whatever one's opinion about the wisdom of settlements -- and the people of Israel are divided on the subject, too -- clearly the settlements and what they represent have become the catalyst for Hussein's con-

the PLO is the sole, legitimate representative of the Palestinian people. According to Susser, Hussein was not signaling that he was about to enter into peace negotiations on his own but was attempting to give new momentum to the peace process, with the inhabitants of the administered territories playing a greater role than before and with stronger inter-Arab involvement and support.

Meanwhile, in Washington, State Department spokesman Charles Redman said that the PLO leadership had failed to seize the opportunity which was offered it and that all parties involved in the peace process will now have to find a new basis to move toward a negotiated peace, including a "resolution of the Palestinian problem."

The State Department spokesman said the PLO had failed the requirements for coming to the peace talks and that the United States had no plans on how to advance the peace negotiations. "It's obvious that we have embarked upon a period of reflection on the part of all parties," Redman stated.

sideration of a break with the past.

Introducing this new element alters the equation but does not necessarily lead to a result that equals peace. The inhibiting factors are still powerful. Unlike Mr. Sadat, the King is not secure enough to go it alone. He seeks legitimacy in the Arab world beyond that of Hosni Mubarak. He looks either for P.L.O. or Syrian approval. Neither seems likely though many attempts are being made by a variety of sources to lure one or the other. The P.L.O. has been wooed by the Americans and the British, as well as the King. But the P.L.O. absolutist rejection of Israel and its inability to control its urge for terrorism has led once again to alienation from the U.S., Britain and Jordan.

The other side of Jordanian legitimacy lies with Syria. The King and Hafez Assad, with Saudi Arabian encouragement, have been mending fences. Hussein's emphasis on an international conference with a Soviet role has been intended to give room for Syrian approval of a Jordanian move.

But is it really only pie in the sky? Syria is surely interested in making the P.L.O. and Arafat look bad, hence its cozying up to Jordan while Arafat stewes. Hence its returning the body of Leon Klinghoffer to the United States. But there is no compelling reason today for Syria to make peace with Israel. Even if the question of the Golan Heights were to be negotiated, Syria would undoubtedly still reject peacemaking. It sees its leadership in the Arab world based on a continuing hostility toward Israel. Syria has become the main ally of the Soviets, the main recipient of Soviet arms because of its anti-Israel position. Peace with Israel would require an upheaval in Syrian thinking which does not seem likely.

Despite these notes of pessimism, one must again return to the new Jordanian urgency for change. Hussein's anxiety about time is particularly acute because he perceives Shimon Peres, whose term as Israeli Prime Minister expires in October, as a more logical partner for negotiations than his successor, Yitzhak Shamir. Nothing reflects his sense of urgency more than the report -- remarkable if true -- that King Hussein told Mr. Peres in a secret meeting in Paris that they should work for an interim agreement of the West Bank. Hussein's position for more than a decade has held that there can be no negotiation until Israel commits itself in advance to give up the West Bank and Jerusalem. Of course, this position precluded negotiations; no Israeli government could or would consider such a process.

But Hussein's new emphasis sounds serious. He knows he cannot ask for anything less than all the territory plus Jerusalem in a final agreement, but he knows that to do so would mean continued stalemate and hence the continued deterioration of the Arab position on the West Bank. And so, he suggests the still risky option of an interim government. He would like to go back to the Arab world and claim that he has not given up on the final goal of recouping the West Bank and Jerusalem. At the same time, he would put a stop to the inexorable dynamic of Israeli movement on the West Bank. The Palestinians living there would have greater control over their own destiny, though not sovereignty, through such an agreement. And the impulse to leave would begin to ebb.

Confusing? Yes, because Hussein is caught on the horns of a dilemma. He can't afford to come forward because his many enemies and potential enemies -- Syrians or Palestinians -- will resist and terrorize him. He cannot afford not to go forward because events on the West Bank seem to be heading in a direction which spells disaster for his Hashemite Kingdom.

How the King will resolve his dilemma is the fascinating story of the months and years ahead. For the people of the Middle East who have suffered for so long, the hope is that he will find a way that will generate a true process of peace with Israel.

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