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### **Deaf Ears in Jerusalem**

Ephraim Kishon some time ago placed his inimitable finger on one of the strange weaknesses of our society: people do not listen to what is being said to them. One example he offered ran roughly as follows: a man standing in a crowded bus stamps on his neighbour's foot. The victim turns round angrily, only to encounter the conciliating smile of the culprit, who says very sweetly: "I did that on purpose". The victim mutters, "Oh, that's alright. No harm done".

A stormy reaction greeted the comparison recently drawn by President Carter between the Palestinians and the American civil rights movement; and Vice-President Mondale's lame interpretation only served to emphasize the obscenity of the equation. Mr. Carter, however, in that "New York Times" interview made a statement whose practical implications may be much more far-reaching. He said:

*"If the Israelis permitted Palestinians to come back to the West Bank, they would be satisfied with just that right to do it. But relatively limited numbers scattered throughout the Arab world would want to return to the poverty of that area".*

It would be a useful exercise to estimate the measure, and evaluate the significance, of untruth in this outrageous statement. Its message is simple: the problem between Israel and the Palestinians began with the conquest of the West Bank by Israel in 1967, and relates to the poor refugees who fled then from this area. All the Palestinians are asking for is to be allowed to return to their homes on the West Bank — and the intransigent Israelis are refusing to grant them this small boon.

Apart from the explicit untruth as to what the Palestinians would be "satisfied" with, there is no hint as to why the Palestinians came to leave the "West Bank," nor any pointer to the fact that they fled before the arrival of the Israeli Army, as it repelled the second Arab attempt to destroy the Jewish State, then within the 1949 Armistice lines. Nor is there a hint from the US President to suggest why, when nowhere in the world have refugees, even when they were forcibly driven from their homes, been enabled to return, Israel alone — which did not drive them out — is expected automatically to enable them to do so.

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The fact is, of course, that the Arabs have been proclaiming the principle of the "right of return" since long before there were any refugees from the West Bank. The thrust of their demand is directed at the territory of Israel before 1967. It relates to the Arabs who fled in 1948, to the homes they left in Jaffa and in Haifa, in Acre and in Ramle. It has been the central theme of the Arab propaganda offensive against Israel ever since 1948. The refugee camps were allowed to exist all the years after 1948 only as a weapon to be used against Israel, the "bomb that would blow up the Jewish State," as President Nasser of Egypt felicitously described it. The

“right of return” has been a central theme of the Arab terrorist organizations since Fatah was founded in 1964. It was the flash-point of the rally of the Arab notables on the West Bank a few months ago. Their eyes and thoughts, they said, were directed at Jaffa and Acre.

President Carter cannot claim to be ignorant of these elementary facts. His bland misrepresentation of the content of the conflict, largely unnoticed in Israel, is further grave testimony to the campaign of unprincipled propaganda designed to secure public support for Washington’s pressure on Israel. The aim of that pressure is not indeed to get Israel to accept refugees on the West Bank, but to induce her to hand over that West Bank to the Arabs, and to barricade herself within the indefensible borders of June 4, 1967 (the 1949 Armistice lines).

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No less significant are the remarks made in Israel last week by the Egyptian Minister of State, Dr. Butros Ghali. He found the moment opportune to lecture the Israelis on their “fears of a Palestinian State”. In fact, he said, Israel had nothing to fear from such a state. After all there were many ways in which Israel’s security could be guaranteed. His remarks could, of course, be dismissed as self-serving blarney; but they may suggest a great potential peril to Israel.

Dr. Ghali knows very well why the Arabs wish Israel to surrender Judea, Samaria and Gaza. It is not only because they want Arab rule there. If Israel were to withdraw from Hebron, from Ramallah, from Nablus, Egypt and her sister states would start making preparations to help “restore the rights of the Palestinians” in Jaffa and Haifa and Acre.

Indeed, Egypt assured for herself, in the “peace treaty” a legitimation for the future attack on Israel. Dr. Ghali is no doubt relying on short memories in Israel or, probably, on the Israeli penchant for not listening. Last November the peace negotiations broke down temporarily because Egypt insisted on the nullification of Article 6, which precluded her making war on Israel, as she might be required to do under her earlier agreements with the other Arab states. This insistence was accompanied by a series of public statements by President Sadat that Egypt would in all circumstances honour its obligation to come to the aid of any Arab state if “attacked by Israel”.

Sadat moreover spontaneously reaffirmed Egypt’s pledges under the Rabat agreement of October 1974. That agreement obliges Egypt to go to the aid of the PLO (as the representative of the Palestinian people) in the struggle for its objective. That is, the destruction of Israel.

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It was precisely Dr. Ghali — this very Dr. Ghali now offering avuncular advice to Israel — who then (last December) provided the most explicit clarification of Egypt’s purpose. He explained that the model of the circumstances that would oblige Egypt to go to the aid of an Arab state attacked by Israel was “Egypt’s entry into the war of 1948”. Not 1973, nor 1967, but 1948. In 1948 the Arab states invaded *Eretz Yisrael* and launched their offensive with the declared purpose of wiping tiny new-born Israel off the face of the earth.

The pattern envisaged by Dr. Ghali is clear. The Egyptians believe that sooner or later the Camp David agreement will result, under American pressure, in the West Bank's coming under Arab rule. With Israel then inside the indefensible 1949 lines, Egypt, in concert with the other Arab states, will proceed to fulfill her obligation to the Palestinians — to help “restore their rights” in the rest of *Falastin*.

Meanwhile, it does no harm to his cause for Dr. Ghali to try to induce in Israel a sense of security: “You have nothing to fear from a Palestinian state”. This is an expression of the hoax the Arabs have perpetuated, with much success, throughout the world: that the dispute is a clash between a strong Israel and a small, poor Palestinian people, and that the heart of the troubles in the Middle East is the “Palestinian problem”.

Once that problem is “solved” by Israel's total withdrawal, and the clock is turned back to 1949, then the Arabs will permit themselves the frank and, indeed, triumphant avowal once again (as in 1948) of the real cause of the “dispute”: their determination to eliminate the Jewish State from the “heart of the Arab world”.

Which is more alarming — the knowledge of the lengths to which Washington and Cairo are prepared to go in their psychological warfare campaigns designed to befuddle and lull the public — or Jerusalem's deaf ear?