

July 11, 2001

DENNIS ROSS CONFESSES

We have entered an era of explanation, admission, and even confession. Last Friday The Jerusalem Post published an explanatory interview with Martin Indyk, the outgoing US ambassador to Israel, while last month, Dennis Ross, for 12 years one of the central exponents of United States policy before and during the woefully misnamed Oslo 'peace process' has now let the public into some secrets of America's thinking.

Thus Ross revealed a sensational fact which he discovered about the so-called peace negotiations. 'Arafat,' he said in an interview in The Jerusalem Post (June 22), 'really can't do a permanent deal.' Ross enlarged on his point in a public lecture at Ben-Gurion University. 'Chairman Arafat could not accept Camp David,' he declared. 'It was too hard for him to make this decision because when the conflict ends, the cause that defines Arafat also ends,' (JP, June 20). What this manifestly means is that Arafat, after all, is not such a bad fellow, but suffers from a psychological block that he can't overcome.

What this psychobabble does mean is that Ross is trying to avoid telling the truth about American policy. One well-known part of the truth is that he and his colleagues have been nourishing the legend that all that's needed for Arafat to make peace is that Israel make major surrenders of territory, jeopardize its security and blot out the testimony of Jewish history. The other part of the truth is that Ross and his colleagues in the State Department have got it all wrong. Arafat has no intention of making peace with the State of Israel.

Ross's apologia for Arafat - a psychological blockage which the State Department whiz boys were unable to detect in all these years of cosseting him - is plainly disingenuous. There is not the slightest reason for anybody, least of all Ross, to delve into the depths of Arafat's mind in order to understand why he 'can't do a deal.'

Arafat himself has openly, indeed defiantly, been telling the world time after time what his plan for Israel is. That plan is no chimera, but a practical strategic objective. It was not created by Arafat. It was first announced by the spokesmen of the Arab states when, at the United Nations in 1947, they opposed the recognition of a Jewish state - even within indefensible borders. They followed up in 1948 by making war in order to abort its birth. Then, in 1967, the destruction of Israel (without Judea, Samaria, Gaza, the Golan and Sinai) was the declared aim of the Arab invasion, and the dismemberment of the Jewish state is the centerpiece of the Palestinian Covenant.

The game plan for achieving that end has even been aired frequently by Arafat. It is the 'policy of phases.' It could be called the 'salami' process. And it is perfectly rational to understand that Barak's offer of near-complete surrender was not enough for Arafat: there are 'phases' still not reached, and goals still unachieved. A Palestinian state (with Jerusalem exclusively as its capital) has not been promised, and Israel has not agreed to let the so-called 'refugees' flood its cities. If he were to underwrite peace with those hurdles not overcome, he would lose control of his own people. Moreover, Arafat knew what he was doing. By not signing, he left the door open to new negotiations.

THE PRELUDE to negotiations is, as usual, killing Jews - intifada. Do you not hear how he is being urged by Israeli leaders now to stop terror and 'come back to the negotiating table'? And are not the Americans doing their best to get Israel to negotiate even if the terror is only 'reduced'? Indeed more light on US behavior and policy after Oslo has been shed by our Ross in an interview in The Australian Jewish Review June 2001.

He actually criticizes Arafat. 'You cannot be promoting incitement to violence,' he said, 'and say you're committed to peace. The two are contradictory.' But pressed by his interviewer, David Mandel, about his failure to react to Arafat's non-fulfillment of his obligations under the Oslo Accords, he admitted that 'the prudential issues of compliance were neglected and politicized by the Americans in favor of keeping talks afloat.'

He went into detail. 'Every time there was a behavior, or an incident, or an event, that was inconsistent with what the process was supposed to be about, the impulse was to rationalize it, finesse it, find a way around it, and not to allow it to break the process, because 'the process seemed to have promise.'

Thus, Jewish buses filled with passengers bombed in Jerusalem, in Afula, in Hadera, in Tel Aviv, were merely 'incidents' or 'events'; blowing up supermarkets was only 'inconsistent with what the process was supposed to be about'; casual murders by stabbing in various streets, or running buses into crowds of soldiers waiting for lifts, or groups of civilians at bus stops, were merely 'behavior.'

Ross did not mention that the Israeli dupes, disregarding all warnings from within Israel, had given Arafat thousands of rifles because he undertook to use them against the murderers. The immediate consequence of the 'peace process' was the threefold increase in the rate of murder of Jews by Arafat's people.

Ross thought it proper to add a piece of advice. He suggests that if circumstances make future negotiations possible they ought to be based on 'something the parties have put on the table, and not [what] the United States has put on the table.' Precisely this good advice has been nixed by the State Department: which, as we see it, is as busy in our affairs as it ever was. And terror goes on.