

6 December 1985

## FROM RAS BURKA TO POLLARD

THE GREATEST DANGER facing Israel derives not from the unchanged belief of the Arab leaders that its elimination can be achieved, but from the assumption of political leaders in Israel that the danger does not really exist; that in fact the Arabs will be appeased and pacified if they are given slices of Western Palestine.

The persistence of this idea, in disregard of the whole of Israel's experience, reflects the psychology of *galut*.

How otherwise explain the repeated acts of self-abasement by Israeli leaders – as though Israel were a defeated nation – in the face of the aggressions and the intransigence of their Arab counterparts, accompanied so often by condescension, contempt, insult and brutality.

The same behaviour can be seen in terms of the Soviet Union. After inciting Egypt and Syria in 1967 to attack Israel, it broke off diplomatic relations with Israel. For years it has been a major source of unbridled anti-Israel propaganda. In 1973, it openly exhorted the Arab states to join in the Yom Kippur war; and it has been in the forefront of every diplomatic offensive against Israel. It has given wide-scale aid to PLO terror (not least by according it training facilities).

Internally the Soviet Union has developed a regime and a climate of oppressive anti-Semitism, more severe than that of the czarist era. Soviet Jews are humiliated and degraded; Zionism and the teaching of Hebrew are outlawed, their practitioners jailed or at least driven out of their jobs.

Israel, logically and with a minimum of self-respect, laid down in 1967 that diplomatic relations could be renewed only at the initiative of the Soviets, who had wantonly broken them off; and it was understood that Israel could not conceive of re-establishing relations unless the USSR put an end to its repressions of the Jews.

Now, suddenly, Israel has become a supplicant. Suddenly its prime minister is publicly asking Moscow to renew diplomatic relations, and is moreover offering a substantial political prize: the prospect that the Soviets will take part in an international framework for negotiations between Israel and Jordan.

To Moscow the primary implications of this message are clear: it may with impunity continue in its propaganda war against Israel and against the Jewish people, and in its oppression of its Jewish citizens. Meanwhile it may install its agents officially in Israel.

All this because one of King Hussein's conditions for granting Mr. Peres the boon of direct talks with him – and the PLO – is that the USSR (as well as the other permanent members of the UN Security Council, all identified with the Arab purpose of reducing Israel to the 1949 Armistice lines) shall have a role in negotiations.

THE CASE of Hussein himself has a longer history. Labour Party leaders have courted him since 1967. Soon after his unsuccessful aggression, they offered him the Allon Plan, which would give him two-thirds of Judea and Samaria “in return” for a peace treaty; and they repeated the offer in numerous secret meetings with him. More recently they went

further; they offered the Allon Plan without a peace treaty – leaving the disposition of the rest of Judea and Samaria to future negotiations.

All to no avail. For 17 years Hussein has succeeded in evading their embrace. Fresh in public memory are the Labour leaders' recent feverish expectations, emphasized by the prime minister's unctuous flattery for a Hussein who continues to rant and rave about Israel's "expansionism" – and still there is no meeting.

A FORTNIGHT ago, unexpectedly, a new dimension of the absurd was injected into Peres's obsession. Rebuffed by Hussein, he learned that another Arab monarch, King Hassan of Morocco, was prepared to meet him. True, the only relevant role Hassan can possibly play in this dispute is that of kibitzer, and negotiations with him would be as significant as negotiations with the president of the international football association – but, is he not an Arab leader, a hospitable king to boot? Peres did not think twice (or, perhaps, even once). He pounced on the invitation with an almost audible hallelujah.

Hassan then announced that he had no intention of meeting Peres, and added contemptuously that if Peres had anything useful to say, he could write a letter to the UN. Thereupon Peres conceded that he did not understand why Hassan had invited him, nor why he had disinvited him.

This healthy admission suggests that Peres might well examine the proposition that it is not only Hassan that he does not understand.

What seems to be his concept of Israel's problem with the Arabs points ineluctably to an *overall* failure on his part to understand the Arabs' historic purpose, their political motives, their past behaviour and their present tactics.

If he were to pay attention to the text of Hussein's rantings against Israel, he would discover that, grotesquely mendacious as they are, they reflect Hussein's abiding identification with the vision of Israel's disappearance from the map. To him they represent historic truth and constitute a perfectly logical doctrine.

It is the all-Arab doctrine. Its essence is that Zionism is in itself an act of aggression, and Israel's very existence is a function of that aggression. Every Arab attack on Israel is thus an act of self-defence, while Israel's efforts to repulse attacks are further acts of aggression. Hussein's own participation in the 1967 war for Israel's annihilation was merely an attempt to put an end to the Zionist aggression; and, in pure logic, Israel's successful defence was an expression of expansionist lust.

To Hussein, as to all the Arab leaders, the meaning of what some joker called "the peace process" is the process whereby Israel will surrender Judea and Samaria, and Gaza and the Golan, so that a third try at the destruction of an attenuated, vulnerable Jewish State can be executed by a united Arabdom. Aside from that, Hussein has no interest in negotiations with Israel.

MORE immediately distressing is the ongoing comedy with Egypt, for whom the treaty with Israel had only one purpose, and one justification, in terms of the Arab doctrine: Israel's surrender of Sinai. Thereafter, except for the bare bones of formality, Egypt clearly regards none of its obligations as binding. The murders at Ras Burka of Israeli civilians by an Egyptian, with the spontaneous dismissal by President Hosni Mubarak of the incident as a minor matter, was only the latest and most gruesome manifestation of what goes on in the Egyptian mind about Israel.

What sense is there in Israel's requests for an inquiry? What is there to "inquire"? The murders at Ras Burka were carried out in public in daylight. The Egyptian who fired the shots is known. It is indisputable that his colleagues were guilty of the slow death of five of the seven victims. What indeed is there to inquire about?

Let us not waste words. Minimal self-respect surely demands that Egypt should be told to stop stalling; and charged with the murders as the manifest consequence of the endless incitement, the process of demonization no less vicious than that of the Nazis, carried on by the Egyptian media against Israel and the Jewish people.

Israel's elementary right to see the peace treaty honoured, and indeed a proper concern for the nature of future relations with Egypt, dictate a forthright statement that Israel will *not* hold any intercourse with Egypt until Cairo begins to fulfill the peace treaty in all of its parts; first and foremost by putting a stop to the propaganda war against Israel.

Instead, at this writing, by a decision of the government opposed by the sane voice of only one minister, Moshe Arens, senior Israeli officials have rushed off to Cairo to comply with the Egyptian *diktat* to discuss Egypt's hunger for another square kilometer of land: Taba.

Fortuitously this shame is being inflicted on Israel against the backdrop of the Pollard affair. Nobody died as a result of what Pollard did. No real U.S. security interest has been endangered. See the determination, even the ferocity, with which an enraged American Government demanded not an "inquiry" (an inquiry Washington will hold itself), not only an apology from Israel, but also immediate steps to ensure "it should not happen again." See how, after the first shock, Israel responded promptly and contritely to U.S. demands.

Compare Ras Burka. Not a single word or act by Cairo to suggest that Egypt must take steps to eliminate the causes of the crime. Worse: no such demand has come from Jerusalem.

Mr. Peres and his colleagues talk as though they believe this incessant humbling and self-abasement of Israel is a step to peace. How myopic, how unteachable, can ambitious politicians be? The truth is the exact opposite.