

April 3, 1992

## IT'S TIME TO START FIGHTING BACK

HEALTH Minister Ehud Olmert charged in Ma'ariv a fortnight ago that the current US president was the most hostile ever to Israel. A quick survey will show that Olmert has hit on the truth. He also asserted that Bush's purpose was to get Israel to withdraw to the pre-1967 Armistice lines.

This is not news. In fairness to Mr Bush, it must be said that every American administration since 1967 has in effect brushed off Arab aggressions and genocidal threats and articulated the unchanging purpose of an Israeli surrender - given a few meters one way or another - of Judea, Samaria, the Golan, Gaza and (usually) Jerusalem. The essence of all the "plans" of successive presidents - such as the "Rogers plan" of 1969 and the "Reagan plan" of 1981 - was precisely that surrender.

The Rogers plan was brusquely rejected by prime minister Golda Meir; the Reagan plan was described by prime minister Begin as "suicide." The essence, however, is trotted out afresh by the State Department for every new president. Mr Bush, seconded by Secretary of State Baker, has added two notes to the original score. One: Judea, Samaria, Gaza and eastern Jerusalem are described - in defiance of history and modern political truth, and in violation even of American-sponsored agreements - as "Palestinian" territory; and second, he has added an obsessive drive to translate the notion of Israeli surrender into practical politics.

Thus now, instead of a "plan" we have a "peace process," into which the Shamir government manipulated itself. Messrs. Bush and Baker cannot honestly deny that they promised Mubarak and Assad that they would accomplish the Israeli surrender.

Though the American statesmen needed no urging, those promises tend to explain some of the ferocity of their campaign against "settlements" and the ugly denial of the loan guarantees. Surely also the framed-up charge of "Patriot technology to China" which has so easily blackened Israel's name in every American home was designed as part of the campaign. An Israel under attack from several sides at once might buckle more readily.

President Bush's letter to George Klein (The Jerusalem Post, March 31) serves only to emphasize the determined pursuit of his policy in disregard of the fact that he is not dealing with a rebellious subject community but with a sovereign democratic state. He makes no bones about his belief that he will decide what is and what is not vital to Israel's security, that the peace he proposes (that is, fulfillment of the Arab demands) will be the "real" peace. Though his heart bleeds for the ex-Soviet Jews, perpetration of their plight is a legitimate price for enabling him to bully Israel into accepting his deadly concept of peace.

JUST at the time Bush was writing his letter to George Klein, the Los Angeles Times (no friend of Israel) was publishing a new survey of Bush's behavior toward Iraq before Saddam's invasion of Kuwait (summarized in US News and World Report, March 23). His record of support and assistance for Iraq turns out to be longer and blacker than we

knew. He was indeed a very special friend of Saddam.

Bush, in repeated personal acts of approval or sponsorship, ensured the grant of huge loans in billions of dollars. Bush knew that Saddam was buying nuclear, chemical and biological weapons and long-range missiles. He certainly was not expecting the invasion of Kuwait.

Against whom, then, did he think Saddam intended using those weapons? Saddam told him: he announced publicly that he intended to "burn half of Israel." What did Bush do - the self-proclaimed agonizer over Israel's security and self-appointed arbiter of its destiny? He did not turn a hair, and American supplies continued to reach Saddam. And he has the gall to insist that he is the arbiter of Israel's security. Again it must be said: Israel must make it plain that it will not treat Bush as an "honest broker." Moreover, it must surely be clear now that Israel must build an efficient information machinery for enlightening the American public, and for providing its friends in the US with the ammunition to that end.

A substantial measure of guilt for the unhindered spread of anti-Israel propaganda in the US (and elsewhere) lies on all the Israeli governments since 1967. Two weeks ago, Minister David Magen, enraged and frustrated at the frame-up of an alleged Israeli transfer of "Patriot" know-how to China, called for an immediate campaign of hasbara - enlightenment - to counter the horrendous damage being done to Israel. Mr Magen presumably was unaware that Israel simply does not have the machinery to launch such a campaign.

Put down starkly on paper the facts seem incredible. At least since 1967, a propaganda war has been in progress against Israel - growing in scope and intensity from year to year. Its content deals with every facet of Jewish life and history, and with Israel day by day.

It is the meat of Arab information, spread by every Arab medium and institution, every non-Arab Moslem medium, every Arab education system. It is spread inter alia by media throughout Europe and a large section of the American media. Whole volumes have been written to describe the propaganda war against Israel.

In this war, the victim - Israel - plays very little part. It conducts a completely different campaign - adequate for a small nation at peace. It finds that the unrelenting blast of hatred, denigration and mendacity can be met by a department inside the Foreign Ministry in Jerusalem with, of course, a small budget to boot.

Now, the Foreign Ministry is not built for the task, any more than it is built to conduct the military defense of the country. It is as though an Israel threatened from the land, the sea and the air, were to prepare its defenses by a handful of plans, a platoon of tanks, two artillery pieces and half-a-dozen fishing boats - all manned by highly efficient warriors from a Foreign Ministry department. Yes, a caricature.

Every Israeli, every friend of Israel in the US and in Europe knows and feels the impact of this nearly one-sided war. To complete the picture, as far as this writer knows, the Israeli government has not devoted a single meeting in the last dozen years to a serious in-depth attempt to face the problem. It can be faced, however, even at this late hour.