

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN A DREAM DOESN'T DIE?

THE PLO'S "NEXT YEAR IN JERUSALEM"

In Vienna yesterday, Arafat predicted "an independent Palestinian state within two years, probably less." Unless he can keep feeding the Palestinian dream of "Palestine for the Palestinians," he loses face, authority, quite possibly also his life. In their Seder, the Jews waited patiently for 18 centuries with the prophetic saying, "Next year in Jerusalem": the dream didn't die. Nor has the Palestinian dream to the same purpose. The central error in the Kissinger conditional promise of US/PLO talks (which became US law in 1975), forced on Schultz by Reagan-Bush, is that it assumes that the Palestinian dreams (of a Palestinian state bounded as the old Palestine, or--failing that--a secular state so bounded, in which Jews would be a minority) would die into what the UN intended in 1947, viz, a partitioned Palestine. On the contrary, I assume that the Palestine-for-the-Palestinians dream (1) will not die, (2) must be kept eschatological, ie, a far-off expectation, (3) must not be fed (as US/PLO talks feed it) into apocalyptic flame, & (4) should be exposed & shamed as romantic-utopian (which was one of the effects of Schultz's denial of a visa to Arafat)....US foreign policy has a poor record of understanding other peoples' dreams. North Vietnam. Chile. Iran. Nicaragua. The Palestinians. This Thinksheet is for dream realism. It's title is a takeoff from Langston Hughes' famous lines, "What happens when a dream dies? Does it dry up like a raisin in the sun, or does it explode?" A Phoenix, a nova?

1. The PLO's charter couldn't be more precise in stating the meaning of the L-word which it's middle initial represents. As a self-appointed umbrella over the fissiparous Palestinian factions, it promises (o omnibus magical syllables!) "liberation" from the existence of the State of Israel. Moderates, meaning upstart leaders expressing willingness to accept the existence of Israel, have been assassinated (major premise). In his press interview after his Geneva speech, Arafat became a moderate (minor premise). Therefore (conclusion), Arafat will probably be assassinated. Give him credit for the courage to become a moderate, a man who priorly approved of the assassination of moderates!

2. Yesterday A. claimed--a palpable untruth--that he's not exceeded the concessions made by the Palestinian summit & his own exec committee. This claim gives him maneuvering room both internal (within & among the Palestinian factions) & external (vis-a-vis governments other than Israel, a government that has all his twists & turns on its prediction software & is amazed the US would give weight to his words). A PR master, he knew exactly what he was doing in making his final concessions not to the UN & the world in his Geneva speech but only in a press conference, a situation (1) of lower dignity & (2) open, in his responses to questions, to fudging & hedging. Willy politico that he is, he knows that the will to survive is stronger than the will to destroy. When a journalist asked if he now renounces the PLO's charter on the destruction of Israel, he angrily shouted "Enough is enough! Do you want me to striptease?" Not a bad idea, Mr. A. If you were in the buff, your power of concealment & appearance would be reduced. Note that in his presumptive conversion from terrorist to peaceloving diplomat, he did not convert from military garb (quasi-military mufti). Read his clothes, not just his lips.

3. Two factors may protect A. from assassination. (1) By commission & omission he's giving potential assassins evidence that his verbal concessions are only verbal, & (2) He's on a roll, world-class, of changes: change of climate (with US complicity) to of attitude to of policy to of action (de facto) to of state (de jure)--now still in stage one of this roll. For him, all now depends on a double duplicity: convincing his troops that he's insincere in his wording (whereas he's realist to know that some concessions must be made) & the rest of the world that he's sincere (even though he continues to repeat publicly the dream of the PLO flag over Jerusalem). As I see it, his "staged" (both senses) scenario is this: (1) Talk partitional peace without seeking the ratification of the PNC (Pal. National Council) or even of the PEC (POL exec committee). (2) Encourage, or at least permit, other PLO leaders, including those closest to him, to reaffirm the PLO Charter's intention to destroy Israel--without his rebuking them. (3) Achieving an international peace conference, though without Israel. (4) Secretly constructing a multinational military threat against Israel. (5) Reaffirming the PLO Charter's destructive intent after, by his own design, being outvoted in the PEC & PNC (his excuse: "I spoke for partition, but we are a democratic body, & I was outvoted"). (6) war....The world seems set to reward violence (terrorism & intifada rock-throwing) & a slippery tongue.

4. Now let's look at a possible alternative course in the **scenario** beginning after (2): On the promise that the "independent Palestinian state" will be & remain unarmed, Israel comes to the table. In violation of Camp David, which did not envisage (nor did the UN in 1947) a Palestinian state "independent" of Jordan, the West Bank & Gaza become a Palestinian state & Jerusalem is internationalized with a UN police force. Border disturbances become the excuses for arming, & Arab states (esp. Syria) are glad to arm "Palestine." The border disturbances become increasingly bloody as "Palestine" becomes increasingly military in materiel & personnel. Israel concludes the situation can only worsen & invades "Palestine" to deny it arms. With or without Jordan & Saudi Arabia, Syria attacks Israel: the alternative course has led to the same place, **war**.

5. Well, is there an alternative to war? There was, but probably isn't now. If there is, it must include **nonpartition**. The Palestinians with few exceptions view longterm partition as unacceptable, & Israel views it as a PLO trick to provide military staging--staging which was denied it first by Jordan & then by Lebanon. Almost all Israelis agree with the PLO charter against partition. While wanting to sound reasonable on the global stage, both sides see partition as even less practicable now than it was when five Arab armies attacked it in 1947-8. Yesterday the Israeli government projected eight new Jewish settlements in the West Bank. Could any Israeli government survive turning the military protection of Jewish settlements over to a nonIsraeli force? Furthermore, under current military technology (including Gadhafi's eagerness to provide the Palestinians with shortrange missiles & two war-gases he now has under high production), & given the terrain & proposed partitional boundaries, who could make a convincing argument that, on its proposed shrunken territory, Israel could (2) control terrorism, (3) resist noninvasive (ie, missile & chemical) attack, & (3) so deploy its military as to depress the dream of "Palestine for the Palestinians" & thus maintain the area's tranquility, ie, prevent war? Partition was not a bright idea in 1947, & it's gotten dumber.

6. From AD70CE to 1947, Jews maintained their **ethnism without territorial nationalism**. There was no territory, terrain, in which they had self-rule, & most of them were in diaspora from Palestine. That today is the situation of the Palestinians. What is different is that the Palestinians, esp. these past thirteen months, have inflamed their ethnism into a militant nationalism. It would be calamitous to "liberate" them into complete (including military) control over the West Bank & Gaza, not to mention East Jerusalem; but it would be inhuman to deny them **self-rule** including police but excluding military. That is the hopeful compromise.

7. The neoMarxist term "**liberation**" has taken on a global force of its own as an inflated political metaphor. If you as a people are "liberated," you have your own government (which the PLO now has) & land (which the PLO hasn't & may or may not get). In Vietnam, the S.Vietnamese "liberation" forces, combined with Hanoi, "liberated" the country from foreigners (French, then American); but the liberation proved ambiguous: S.Vietnam is now groaning under Hanoi's hand. Some American blacks wanted territorial nationalism & had to settle for a freer ethnism--which will probably happen also to S.African black territorial nationalists--and to Palestinians within Israel's present boundaries. Most "liberation theologies" have bought into the myth that you're not liberated unless you have military dominance over a territory. Note two ambiguities: (1) In Babylon, the Jews liberated their souls & their hopes without controlling the land; & (2) Many Jews now feel that Jews & Judaism are less liberated precisely because they do have military dominance over a territory. I fight against **inevitablism**, the dogma that every ethnos, people, both has a right to have, & will have, its own land. History & justice are not that simple. Tennyson's Camelot is "Never built at all, / And therefore built for ever." Studdert-Kennedy, killed in WWI, called on his people not to rest "till we have built Jerusalem in England's green and pleasant land." Messiah is to come (say most Jews); Messiah came & is to come (say most Christians). And we make the inner space we occupy: "The world moves on from side to side, / No wider than the heart is wide" (E. St.-V. Millay).