

## ARAFAT'S AT LEAST VERBAL CONVERSION: A STRATEGIC, OR ONLY A TACTICAL, CHANGE?

2283

14 Dec 88

ELLIOTT THINKSHEETS

309 L.Eliz.Dr., Craigville, MA 02636

Phone 508.775.8008

Noncommercial reproduction permitted

Yesterday, Arafat addressed the UN in Geneva & this letter of mine appeared in the CAPE COD TIMES. A few hours ago our Sect. of State agreed to dialog with the PLO shortly after Arafat, in a press conference, for the first time stated Israel's right to exist & to do so "within secure borders." In Stockholm he'd said as much to four American Jews, who were disappointed he'd not then said it in his Geneva speech....My conclusion? Schultz's hanging tough, refusing Arafat a visa, pushed Arafat over a line he'd never before crossed in public. Desperate for movement, he became a traitor to the PLO's *raison d'etre*. It remains to be seen how this betrayal plays out among the Palestinians--some of whom will see it as a **necessary** & therefore acceptable redefinition of the PLO's objective, a strategic change dictated by objective reality (*viz*, the PLO's military hopelessness *vis-a-vis* Israel); some, agreeing it's a strategic change, will declare it a **sellout** of Palestinian hope ("Palestine for the Palestinians"); & some will take the inbetween position that the change is **only tactical**, made so as to move from immobility one step toward flying the PLO flag over Jerusalem (which is the Israeli view as it's been coming from the Israeli embassies in Washington & at the UN, & from Jerusalem, where it's the wee hours). This third is also my view. To put it in the terminology of this Thinksheet's title, Arafat's conversion is only verbal, & he's going to spend the next some weeks assuring the fractious fragments of "the Palestinian movement" that this is indeed the case: the change is rhetorical, not substantive.

1. My **scenario**? Schultz won (in wresting a verbal shift out of Arafat) & lost (in yielding to Reagan, who yielded to Bush's plea that Reagan should bite the bullet, both improving Reagan's peace image & relieving Bush, who wanted the decision made, of having to pay the costs of making the decision).

2. What does the decision advance, "the peace process" or the **war** prospect? Probably the latter. Every state wants the dignity of arms (Costa Rica, at present, being the exception), so not even the UN could keep a Palestinian state unarmed. Continuous bloodiness.

3. Will the PLO now shrivel or flourish? Neither: it will have ceased to exist for the reason it came into existence, *viz*, to push Israel into the sea. It will have **died** into what the UN in 1947 hoped for. As, eg, the Paulist Fathers died into Catholic-Protestant dialog, having been founded to convert, no cohabit with, Protestants. When I said this in the Vatican to the PF head, Tom Stransky, he laughed & said, "Our purpose has almost reversed, but at least we have the same name!" That's a PF & a PLO I can love.

4. Think of it! In one week, two rhetorical masters, Gorby & Arafat, got off big with making a virtue of necessity! Both walking the highwire with fading triumphalistic eschatologies. Let's thank God & be wary.

## Arafat's 'shift' just an illusion

PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat is a highly skilled practitioner of the art of the double message, and there he went again, fooling millions, including your columnist Mary Zepernick.

While this trickery took four forms in the speech with which he closed the PLO summit, I mention just one.

With acceptance of U.N. Security Council Resolutions 242 (which does not specifically recognize the state of Israel) and 338, he affirmed the PLO's determination to destroy Israel — an intention not only mentioned in the PLO's founding document but at the heart of it, and which constitutes the PLO's reason for being.

If the PLO were serious in its professed desire for peace with Israel, it would have withdrawn its constitutional aim to destroy Israel.

What did he do to talk war out of one side of his mouth while talking peace out of the other? He restated the goal of flying the PLO flag over Jerusalem. He said it knowing that almost every Jew would reply, "Over my dead body."

So we're back to square one in spite of the PLO's illusional shift from violence to diplomacy.

The Moslem religion cannot tolerate a non-Islamic state on territory that was ever under Islamic control, and the Jewish religion (as well as Israeli politics) cannot surrender Jerusalem, now under Israeli control, to another religion — which leaves open the option of internationalization.

In taking the unusual step of requiring Arafat to apply for a visa, Secretary of State Shultz intended to insult the PLO chairman. Shultz decided that antagonizing the Arab world was not too high a price to pay for the privilege of the insult. We'll just have to see how this scenario plays out in the byzantine world of Middle East geopolitics. I'm with Shultz.

The signal Shultz sent was this: "Get off our backs. If you want peace, don't come to us to broker it for you; talk with Israel. As for the silly notion of an international peace conference under U.N. auspices, count the USA out. We are not so easily gulled or pressured as you had hoped."

WILLIS ELLIOTT  
Craigville