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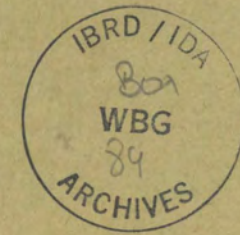
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M.A. HAKKI - speech -

NEWS SERVICE

INFORMATION AND PUBLIC AFFAIRS DEPARTMENT

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- THE TIMES
- THE FINANCIAL TIMES
- WASHINGTON STAR-NEWS



We Want Peace— and Our Land Back

By Mohamed Hakki

Now that most, if not all, of the myths in the Mideast have been blown away and the Arabs have regained self-respect and confidence, what next? It is probably futile now to talk about the past, except if it offers a guiding light to the future.

That the United States should accept the major share of the responsibility for all this tragic blood-bath is irrefutable to many close observers. The United States wasted the only golden chance to get the Israelis to talk to the Arabs — in 1971, when Egypt was ready to enter the so-called "proximity talks" in New York.

The manner by which the United States wasted this opportunity is equally significant, because at that time giving Israel additional Phantom jets was thought to be a U.S. means of persuasion and leverage over Israel. We now know it only strengthened the hand of Israeli intransigence. Israel, we know from hindsight, myopically thought that if it stalled a few weeks, the unpleasant U.N. session would be over, and the American national elections would be on, when candidates of all colors and persuasions would need the Jewish vote. (How can the Arabs ever make it or win friends in this country when you have elections virtually every two years?)

An Egyptian's View

I say myopically for two reasons.

- These additional two years did not in fact lessen Arab feelings of bitterness and consequently determination.
- Nor did it add any real security to Israel. Filled with the spirit of hubris and breast beating, we began to hear expansionist ideas—such as Dayan's plan to build a city in Sanai, hotels and motels and boatels in Sharm El Shiekh—until formal annexation of occupied Arab land became the official political platform of the ruling party in Israel!

MRS. MEIR ONCE ASKED Wes Gallagher, general manager of the AP:

"President Sadat keeps talking about his willingness to sacrifice one million lives for war. Presumably this means one million on their side, and one million on our side. What is it that we have which they are willing to sacrifice that much in a war with us to get?"

Mr. Gallagher replied: "Their land, Mrs. Meir!"

MANY JEWISH VOICES outside Israel and some inside are beginning to see this. You in the West call it "The handwriting on the wall." Young Sabras, born in either Palestine or Israel (meaning before and after the creation of the state of Israel) have also been awakening to this fact, appalled at the militarization of their society (and consequently our own too. We now wonder: Is this their contribution to the area and to the world?) But so much for that. What now?

In recent days we have heard Mrs. Meir and Mr. Eban. One says: Never until the foe is defeated. The other, in an attempt to balance her in the face of a genuine change in American attitudes, says: substantial concessions and a cease-fire "in place."

We also heard three Arab voices, those of Presidents Sadat and Assad and King Hussein. The three are saying: We do not want anything more than our land back. No annihilation of Israel. Peace forever — not an uneasy and treacherous truce. Three times we have tried that before and paid the price with our land, homes and our sons. It is our people who are refugees, and our map which is shrinking constantly. No more. After 1973, nothing will be the same again.

THE WHOLE DIFFERENCE in the Arab attitude, and this should be briefly made clear and then on with preparation for peace, is this:

By the very act of accepting the Security Council Resolution 242, Egypt — and indeed the rest of the Arabs — were saying: to exist at all in the Mideast we have to coexist with an Israel. Our only quarrel is about frontiers — the final map. We have repeatedly asserted we were willing to sign a "peace treaty," a word which was considered by our hard-liners to signify defeatism and the acceptance of status quo — a status which was constantly changing, with new *faits accomplis* being created every day.

The fact that Mr. Eban sounds more eloquent and his English sounds more polished does not mean that he has a better case. It only means that he is a brilliant speaker, born in South Africa. But he should also remember: the years he lived in Egypt, and whether we harboured any ill feelings towards the Jews. Maybe one of the tragedies of the situation is that new Jewish arrivals to the Mideast do not know us and we do not know them. But Mr. Eban should know better and should be more forward looking. Maybe this also explains why he is better than the others.

Americans may identify with Israel because it is formed of immigrants, but I doubt if the wiping out of the Indians is something that modern Americans can be proud of!

WHAT IS SO UNFORTUNATE is that there is no equal change of heart either in the United States, which stands completely alone in open support of Israel with the exception of South Africa, or in Israel.

What the Israelis are saying is: We do not want to become another dirty, backward, Levantine country

What we are saying is You have to be long.

What Israel is saying is: Terror is the

only language the Arabs understand. Ten eyes for one, and a hundred lives for every precious one.

What we are saying is: You have to be long — not dominate. To believe in Israeli superiority is the essence of racism — no matter how you look at it. We enjoy and respect the great Jewish contributions to civilization, both when they lived among us in the Islamic Empire, or now that we are behind and trying to catch up. But we deplore terrorism, Gentile, Jewish or Arab. We deplore it all the more if this is the only contribution that Israel is giving to us.

NOW IS THE MOMENT to be seized by America for peace in the Mideast. We do not believe that, as recently reported, only six percent of the American people support our position, because the poll was taken in New Jersey. From the telephone calls, letters and messages of support, we believe in the ultimate sense of justice in the American people.

We have learned our lesson and are patiently waiting for a genuine move toward peace. When we talk of the Palestinian legitimate rights, we mean giving these people back their dignity. We do not mean to throw Israel into the sea or threaten its very existence. The U.N. Security Council resolution is very clear and we adhere to it.

THANK GOD THAT Dr. Kissinger received the Nobel Peace prize. No Arab would burn himself over that, I am sure, if only this honor will enable him to withstand the pressure of the pro-Israeli lobby in the Senate, headed by Sen. Jackson, who still think that the only road to peace is "an Israeli victory — and a decisive one at that too!" Kissinger presumably also can withstand the pressures of all the Vietnam doves who turned into super-hawks in the Mideast.

We are glad that there are still Fulbrights, Hatfields and Mansfields around so some Arabs can retain some faith in America in the face of that enormous tilt to Israel's favor.

We do not want a single American home or grain silo to be cold because of any oil shortage, because we also aspire to have some of this luxury for our people one day. All we want is to bring the message a little closer to home.

THE AVERAGE AMERICAN may not realize to what extent his country is isolated in the world on the Mideast issue. We have had to buy short-wave radios to tune in to London, Paris and even Canada, to be able to keep up to date with the outside world. But the situation is fast changing. We even had a Palestinian girl on CBS and the press described an Egyptian nurse as "beautiful." Who could have heard this before?

The time is now, because we no longer have a chip on our shoulder. Israel will not change her heart as long as the Jacksons go on talking their hard line. We can only have peace if we have mutual respect. Our problem is to elevate the standard of living of the Fellaah (farmer). Maybe his hut is still made of mud, but he is now fighting gallantly and respectably in the desert.

WHAT AMERICA should ask Israel is, How do you intend to live with the Arabs? You should put aside your obsession with Phantoms and geopolitical games.

Let it also not be forgotten that the Soviets — not just the Americans — will never allow any Arab soldier to set foot on Israel proper — let alone annihilate it. King Hussein told us in the newspaper *Al Ahrām* in 1969 that Kremlin leaders told him this bluntly on his visit to Moscow.

It may be astonishing to say this now, but it should be clear to everyone here, (including the Jewish minority who may or may not believe in Zionism) that we are wellwishers of Israel and are concerned about its "survival." We have no illusions about it and no aspirations against its survival in the first place. The fact that some people have their own hang-ups about the Soviets is not our fault. But to turn this against us too — that is the supreme injustice.

Mohamed Hakki, former foreign editor of the authoritative Cairo daily newspaper Al Ahrām, is now living in Washington and working in the field of international development.