

# Another deadline passes...

**A**NOTHER DEADLINE PASSES! Was it really six months ago that politicians all strutted onto the White House south lawn? At the moment the overall outlook is uncertain at best, more likely than not simply bleak, at worst potentially catastrophic.

In short the situation in the Holy Land remains tense, pregnant with more violence. Just a few days ago fast shifting emotions were in some quarters up a bit as "autonomy" — whatever that is to be — proceeds with "Palestinian police" — whatever they are to be — about to move into Jericho and Gaza — whatever we are now to call these places — and a few "international observers" — whatever they will end up doing — going to Hebron.

Rabin and company have used the excuse of the latest attack, this one in Afula, to seal off the occupied territories from "mother" Israel. While the Palestinians languish and suffer, while the harsh military occupation persists, while American moneys and arms continue to pour into the Jewish state, the Israelis are now actually importing foreign workers hoping to further prostrate Palestinian society. In taking these steps at least the Israelis are playing their hand more openly.

The much-touted DOP — the Declaration of Principles that has already proved more confusing than resolution 242 and seems destined to be endlessly debated ad-infinitum — is in reality much more about unstated Israeli goals that are going forward while the debaters haggle. Among these:

▼ Disgorging Israel of the ghetto it nurtured in Gaza, casting the Palestinians onto the backs of the international community, consolidating Israel's grip over occupied Jerusalem and the resources of the West Bank area.

▼ Attempting economic and clandestine penetration into the Arab World under cover of having finally made a historic deal with the Palestinians.

▼ So dividing the Palestinians from themselves that the institutions of Palestinian nationalism further collapse while the very cause of Palestinian nationalism fizzles out.

▼ Further cementing relations with the US at a time when American support for Israeli hegemony in the region — which means money, arms, and covert assistance — remains critical and threats to American imperialist interests in the region are growing.

▼ And finally, setting the stage for escalating attacks against the "fundamentalists" throughout the region, es-

From



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pecially in Egypt, Gaza, and Lebanon — and even for American-Israeli intervention should any of the critical client-regimes be seriously threatened.

To those grounded in the history of the region as well as that of Israel's dominant Zionist Labour Party, it's quite clear that soothing rhetoric aside, the Israelis are boldly pushing ahead with these historic goals. Closest to home, and foremost among these, is to fracture and derail Palestinian nationalism, to disgorge uncontrollable Gaza, to retain effective control over much of the West Bank and Jerusalem while linking the pockets of Palestinian population centres to a new form of de facto dual-occupation with Jordan.

Even while pursuing these steps to further enhance what is very much a sui generis form of Zionist apartheid, the Israelis are nevertheless using clever public relations and behind the scenes incentives in an attempt to push forward economic and political — if not diplomatic — relations with the major Arab states.

Like the volatile stock market, the emotions of the contemporary Mid-east have been swinging widely of late. This is all the more reason to step back a bit from the day-to-day headlines and consider at the larger context in which things are taking place.

So while spending a few days recently in the Israeli-Palestinian cauldron, I sat down with an old friend, with one of the shrewdest analysts of events in this region that I know, to reflect upon the entire situation.

"The Oslo agreement was imposed upon Rabin..." Matti Peled opened.

"He needed a new idea because all the old ideas failed. When he became prime minister he supported the Madrid conference and he said that within nine months we will conclude the negotiations. Then he said, 'I was wrong, it will take a year'. By August '93 he realised that a year was expiring and he had nothing to show.

"At that point, Peres told him, 'Look, my

## DESPAIR and CYNICISM

*The country is in such a depressed mood, I don't recall anything similar throughout my life in this country.*

**Matti Peled**

Occupied Jerusalem

boys have cooked something in Norway, maybe we can pick this up and come with this as the new message'. And (Rabin) accepted this reluctantly because he simply could not agree that a whole year was wasted and he had nothing. Here people expected him to achieve something. In America people expected him to achieve something."

Quite often the daily headlines strip historic developments of context and motivations, in the process, making it exceedingly difficult to truly grasp what is actually taking place and why. One simply hears that there has been a historic agreement and then watches for a few moments as the politicians play out their roles on the new world order's television stage.

But if one wants to understand what's really going on, what's really behind the political choreography that leads to the brief show bites on television, just where things are actually going as opposed to what the politicians want everyone to believe, then one has to ask those who actually knew the players involved, know the history of the issues involved, and are free to speak their mind.

Such a person is Mattityahu Peled, now in his 70s. Peled was one of the five Israeli army general staff commanders in the 1976 war. He has known Yitzhak Rabin for over 40 years. Way back in 1957 he was briefly the first Israeli military governor of the Gaza Strip. After his retirement from the army with the rank of major-general, he set about a second career teaching Arabic literature. Shortly after the 1973 war he emerged as one of Israel's most credible advocates not only of a Palestinian state but of major changes in Zionist ideology. He was one of the first "establishment" Israelis to make contact with the PLO.

"So, just who 'imposed' the Oslo Agreement on Rabin?" I asked Peled as we sat, fittingly I thought, in Jerusalem's Notre Dame Hotel which itself sits on top of the old Green Line that separated Jewish and Arab Jerusalem until 1967. "It was imposed upon him by circumstances," Peled noted. "It was either admit failure or come

out with a new idea that would dazzle everybody. And his reluctance to accept it was so strong that he wouldn't sign the agreement, he made Peres sign it. And while he was standing there behind Peres all the world saw how miserable he was, how unhappy."

"You don't think it was an act?" I queried. "No, I know him too well. And when he came back he said he had a belly-ache while Peres was signing it... And I believe him."

"I'll take your word for it. But as the agreement was so much to Israel's advantage and so much a surrender by the Palestinians, it's hard for me..." I countered, wanting to provoke Peled to explain more deeply.

"Only weeks before that he wouldn't even refer to Arafat as other than 'that murderer, the assassin'. All of a sudden he had to shake his hand," Peled insisted. "He was very reluctant to come, wasn't he? Didn't the Americans pressure him?"

"He wanted Peres to deal with it," Peled added. "But the Americans insisted that he should be there. Then he said very clearly when he got back that the Oslo Agreement was drafted too hastily, that there were many loopholes, many problems which were not dealt with seriously, and that he would now set it right. The question was how and when as after all there's a timetable in the Oslo Agreement. So he said, 'well the timetable is not sacred'."

"This is an important point because in an operative agreement the two important points are first what the parties undertake to do and then when are they going to do it. When he said that the timetable is not sacred he actually broke the agreement.

"I don't know why the Palestinians went along with it. I simply don't understand it.

"Then Rabin began to empty the agreement of all its content by giving a list of hundreds of little details, all of which had to be discussed and agreed and signed before the implementation of the agreement can start, (and that's) when Arafat began to loose popularity."

# War will annihilate North Korea

By Ranan Lurie

**K**IM YOUNG-SAM HAS BEEN president of South Korea since 1993. He was interviewed in Seoul in the last week of March.

The situation in the Korean peninsula has been progressively deteriorating, particularly so after the United States this week deployed 200 Patriot missiles in South Korea, making war inevitable. North Korea refuses to allow Western-controlled International Atomic Energy



transparent Korea through our comprehensive reforms. And I would be really surprised if there is even one incident of torture in my country.

● Are you going to try to find if there is, in fact, any mistreatment of prisoners in your prisons and jails?

■ I wish I had time to visit those prisons myself, but what I have done is to make sure that all those officials who are responsible for the management of the prisons, that if they have even one incident of such maltreatment or torture, then the