

Victims of Israeli game-plan

THE ISRAELIS ARE RIDING HIGH IN the saddle at the moment. They practically own the Clinton administration — and before Bill Clinton leaves town — which they are well aware could be after one term just like Jimmy Carter before him — they are planning to get their man to sign off on a couple of things dear to their heart.

First of all — after they've got Jordan along with the Vatican to play a masquerading game of shared "religious sovereignty" regarding Jerusalem — they intend to get Clinton's administration to recognise the historic city as their own, as Israel's capital.

In this context they are racing ahead to further marginalise the remaining Arab and Muslim presence in the city in actuality, while Foreign Minister Shimon Peres is sent all over the place to tell anyone willing to listen how concerned the Israelis really are to be fair to all the world's religious concerns.

Meanwhile, on the ground, even more so than those before them, the Rabin government is hastily creating more facts that make any territorial integrity for the Palestinians of any significant part of dying Palestine quite impossible. Jerusalem is not only destined to be Israel's alone but the area around Jerusalem is targeted for still more Israeli developments that will permanently divide the northern part of the West Bank from the southern.

Beyond Jerusalem, and just to make the point that they never forget their friends — or their enemies — the Israelis are intending to get Jonathan Pollard to come to live with them, after having betrayed his own. This too they plan to get Clinton to deliver before he heads back to Arkansas.

One more thing. The Israelis would like at this particular point in their history to get American troops into the region; no matter how much they occasionally profess otherwise. They are planning to do so in the guise of "peacekeeping" forces on the Golan if and when President Hafez Assad is ready to do a Sadat. It will be for them an extra insurance policy just in case they have miscalculated, just in case the unforeseen should occur and they need to involve the Americans poste haste. Other friends of Washington in the region are not going to protest. In fact they actually favour the step.

As for the overall situation in the Arab World — contrary to the way things are presented — the region is psychologically depressed, politically drawn down, and spiritually stripped of dignity. Intellectuals occasionally reflect these existential realities.

Just think back to the events of recent history.

Back in 1967 a rather small army from a rather small and underpopulated Israel



OK, so we had 27 years of occupation during which the economy was destroyed. The Israelis made us totally dependent on working for them and now they pull out of Gaza but lock us in here and throw the key to Arafat. This is progress? The answer is Hamas.

Unnamed Gaza Youth

The New York Times
18 July 18, 1994

— with active American support — destroyed much of the military power of the Arab World and humbled its neighbours. While this cataclysmic regional event became a kind of psychological propellant for the Israelis; for the Arabs they have yet to regain their self-confidence. Moreover, that confrontation reflected the considerable weaknesses of Arab political and military organisation; weaknesses which have yet to be corrected.

That the "status quo" will be defended and no one will be allowed to defy the modern-day American Empire can be seen in the events taking place from Iraq to Algeria.

Indeed — part of what is taking place in the region as the Palestinians are converted into the equivalent of Red Indians on reservations and one Arab regime after another clamouring for a me-too deal with the Americans — is a desperate attempt by the major regional powers to shore themselves up against further populist challenges.

It is in this overall context of each looking out for its own survival that Middle-east countries have decided to turn to their former enemy, Israel, in hopes that the combination of American and Israeli strength — as manifested through a combination of arms, intelligence capabilities, and covert action — can keep

the region "stable".

The Arab powers, together with the PLO of Yasser Arafat, have for the most part all been successfully manipulated to compete against each other for Washington's largesse and attention.

At the moment, at least, it is all a great triumph for Israeli power and prowess. But, of course, what historical tensions are being pent-up and might eventually erupt as a result of today's developments are difficult to forecast.

Meanwhile, back in the ghettos of Palestine, Arafat is being kept on a very short leash. The promised millions being squeezed in his direction are in direct proportion to how successfully he allows himself to be squeezed by his new benefactors. The Israelis are looking for one more major step from Arafat before he becomes dispensable, as was Sadat before him. They want the Palestine National Charter changed; and indeed they have Arafat's promise to convene a Palestine National Council meeting soon to do just that.

The Arab nationalists and "rejectionists" are bottled up in Damascus where hardly anyone is listening. It's already been clearly established Assad can have a demilitarised Golan back. What's being debated are the terms of the peace accommodation.

The other once proud centre of Arab nationalism, Baghdad, is no longer a viable player in the larger dramas of the region, even though the future results of what has been done are yet to be known.

And Iran also has been sufficiently isolated and drained of resources so that it's unable to forcefully pursue its own ideological preoccupations; though here too the future remains most uncertain. There is considerable reason to believe, in fact, that the next target for American imperialism, prompted of course by the Israelis, will be to bring the Iranians to heel thus preventing them from developing nuclear weapons as well as the wielding power in the area.

Living with the irony that the great superpower professing itself as the champion of democracy is actually the firmest supporter of autocracy and repression, Palestinian intellectuals, many of whom are vehemently in opposition to what has been taking place, clearly lack critical mass and forceful determination at this point.

Edward Said has written a number of penetrating critiques that are absolutely devastating to the PLO which he knows so well; but few in Palestine are even aware. Poets like Mahmoud Darwish and Fawaz Turki are off in a raging daze hardly able to contain their anguish but completely unable to channel their opposition. Major political personalities such as Shafik Al-Hut can deliver spellbinding orations to Arab audiences; but seem completely unable to put together alternative strategies, not to mention alternative political movements.