

Circumstantial evidence of Hauser doubletalk

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Peace in the Mid-east (ICPME) in Tel Aviv.

The much-hyped Stockholm meeting in December just before the American decision to start publicly talking to the PLO sadly catapulted Hauser to international notoriety.

At that time she and her fellow American Jews loudly claimed that their "joint statement" with Yasser Arafat was an important element in the "breakthrough" with Washington; and in the US the story spread wildly once Secretary of State Shultz reversed himself and ordered the "substantive dialogue" with the PLO in Tunis.

Such self-promotion has been a characteristic of the opportunistic Hauser for a long time. Indeed one of the oldest leaders of the American Jewish community was overheard in Washington recently saying that he "wouldn't trust Rita for a second, but she's a very energetic lady".

What happened is another case where image is far more important than reality.

There was in fact no joint statement signed by Yasser Arafat, even though Hauser pushed and pushed for one. Nor, in fact, was the effort by Ms Hauser instrumental in bringing about the American change.

Rather, there was a statement signed by the American Jews and a number of PLO persons saying pretty

much what the PLO had been saying for sometime; and in reality many American Jews had met previously with Arafat and said similar things.

But Hsuser's timing was superb; for she knew change was coming and wanted to see how much of the credit she could glean. It's even possible some kind of conspiracy is afoot and that Hauser may have been specifically set up by the US government, "positioning" her for further involvement with the Palestinians, American Jews, and Israelis.

If so, her recent work with National Security Council chief Brent Scowcroft and her involvement at both the New York conference and the inter-religious conference in Washington a few days earlier would serve as circumstantial evidence.

Furthermore, the real reasons for the American shift last December 16, had to do with behind-the-scenes pressures being brought from America's European allies, as well as the Soviets, with a helping hand from Saudi ambassador, Prince Bandar, who was intimately involved. As one insider notes, "what was happening publicly with the Jews in Stockholm was sideshow to the private diplomacy going on intensely behind the scenes. And even so, it took Arafat's threat to resign to finally get the Americans to change their posture, as noted in a previous column last January.

Questioned as she walked out of the conference session in New York where she and Shaath has tangled, Hauser told me that "what I outlined is not my plan, not my preference. But that's what's going to happen so they can take it or leave it".

It was a perfect example of doubletalk and misrepresentation for just a few days earlier, in a phone interview, Hauser had specifically told me she was indeed fully behind the Bush administration strategy to push aside talk of a Palestinian state and of an international conference and push for small steps, autonomy, local elections, and an end to the Intifada.

"It's been the one I've been pushing for some months now," Hauser told me just a few days before the conference, completely contradicting her attempt a few days later to suggest she was only a messenger, not an advocate. At that time she was referring to the basic policy outlined on March 6, in *The New York Times* by Tom Friedman, an outline that everyone understood represented State Department leaking of Bush administration thinking.

Here is more of what Hauser had to say just a few days before her public run-in with Shaath:

Hauser: "I share the views expressed in Friedman's article in *Times*...on what the administration is planning because it is very much our view and its been the one I've been

pushing for some months now...elections, autonomy, moving forward on that basis, building up some measure of confidence and preparing right after the autonomy for the international conference. (We need to) hold out to the PLO that this is the beginning of a process that will lead to face-to-face talks and if you get the Israelis over the hump of allowing the obvious PLO people to run (in local elections) you are beginning a process of face-to-face and that's what the exercise has got to be because a big international conference is not going to happen."

Bruzonsky: "Then your view hasn't changed very much from the November 13, Op Ed that you wrote in *The (New York) Times* (advocating autonomy)?"

Hauser: "Exactly. I've been pushing it very actively with Scowcroft and with Dennis Ross and others; and so I'm glad to see that is eventuating apparently into the policy."

Bruzonsky: "Do you have any reason to think the Palestinians are interested?"

Hauser: "I think if promoted appropriately to them, and I think that's going to be some of the subject that's going to be discussed between Baker and Shevardnadze, I'm very hopeful. It's a question of packaging and presentation and I think it's going to get there. There is no other way to

get there because the Israelis are categorically rejecting any conference. I think this is the way it's going to move."

Bruzonsky: "Are you speaking for all five of the people who went on the trip?"

Hauser: "Yes, I think (they) share my views...because I did a paper on it and I gave it to Scowcroft. I think this is clearly the way to go because its the only way to get something to happen... And the Israelis will not move at this point on the idea of a major international conference..."

Bruzonsky: "I think that the very word 'autonomy' has been so discredited now that it is sneared upon in the territories."

Hauser: "Then if it is, we've got another problem."

Bruzonsky: "I think we do have that problem."

The great mistake Arafat made in Stockholm was to allow Hauser — well-known as a front person for both the Labour Party in Israel and the Republican Left in the US — to propel herself forward as a real advocate of peace and friend of the Palestinians. By doing so Arafat helped Hauser and parts of the anti-Palestinian Jewish establishment to undermine the positions of many of the real friends of the Palestinians both in Israel and America.

In a much smaller way the same danger exists with persons like Joyce

Starr, Thomas Friedman; and, it must be said, with at least some of the very persons in the *New Outlook* magazine and Peace Now with whom the PLO met in New York.

Please understand. It's not that the Palestinians shouldn't be reaching out and engaging in dialogue with more Jews and Israelis. The Intifada has brought on much change, and there are many persons and groups that need a bit of help. But in expanding ones circles and ones supporters — admittedly an urgent necessity for the Palestinians and for the Arabs in general — it's vital to know who the real friend are and whom one can really count on. And its even more vital to know whom among ones new contacts might have an agenda other than the one being mentioned and who in fact might be working against you while smiling at you.

For if the PLO isn't careful, persons like Rita Hauser, Joyce Starr and Thomas Friedman will indeed lead the PLO to a 1989 version of 1982 and another series of ambushes and disasters.

At least Shaath's public response to Hauser in New York was right on. His recollections of what happened in 1982 suggested the PLO wasn't going to be coopted and mislead this time. And his insistence that "We shall continue our Intifada as it is our only guarantee that peace can be achieved in the future" was unequivocal.



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