



Yasser Arafat

THE Palestinian predicament has become even more unlikely of a peaceful resolution because of two major historic developments that have simply come at the wrong time for the Palestinian cause.

Two other factors, though, offer more hope.

When Yasser Arafat began divising his diplomatic offensive in the mid-1980s, only one of these four developments was foreseeable.

Nor could such historic twists be foreseen late in 1987 when the young generation of Palestinians raised under Israeli occupation decided to launch, and then to sustain, the Intifada.

When Yasser Arafat publicly spoke the words Washington insisted upon in Geneva in December 1988 it was still too early to factor in these major historic developments about to be exploded into world headlines.

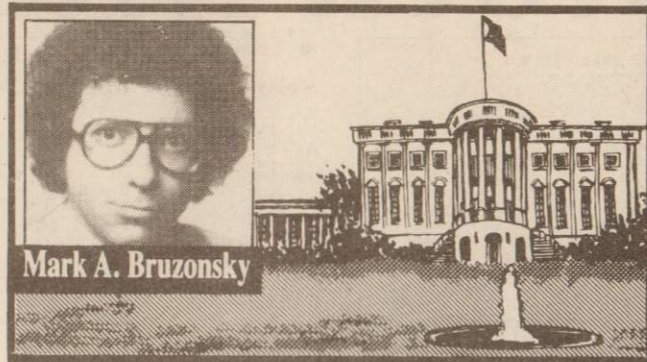
And even when the Palestine National Council early last year decided to endorse Arafat's historic shift towards peaceful co-existence with Israel, the impending events now changing our world were not subjects for discussion.

But now nearly half-way through 1990 these formerly unforeseen developments cast a huge shadow over the entire Palestinian diplomatic offensive.

First of all, the corrupted and discredited regimes of

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From



Mark A. Bruzonsky

Washington

New factors in the Palestinian equation

themselves—so too fell the Eastern European barrier against political and economic relations with Israel. All this couldn't have come at a worse time for the Palestinian cause.

Secondly, pressed to the wall by internal economic and existential problems, the Kremlin decided to lift the lid on Soviet Jewry. We're not yet sure just what clandestine price Israel and wealthy Jewish businessmen—in some cases co-ordinated by Edgar Bronfman's World Jewish Congress—might be paying for this. But we do know that large numbers of Soviet Jews are on the way to Israel—in many cases against their will as they clearly would prefer to go elsewhere if they could. All this couldn't have come at a worse time for the Palestinian cause.

The third major development, though, is the new situation in South Africa.

There, the African National Congress, with its much sounder, much more consistent, and much more principled stand, is, true enough, showing up the PLO. But

the ANC leadership, nothing less; negotiations strictly on the basis of equality and one-man one-vote, nothing less. Additionally the ANC insists upon the continuance of armed struggle, alongside diplomacy, as the only way to ensure that the other side will negotiate in good faith and feel the requisite pressure to acquiesce. The contrast with the approach of the PLO is obvious.

Furthermore, in South Africa the White minority regime realises that White power is diminishing and Black power growing. It is this basic power equation, coupled with the actual numbers of Whites versus Blacks, and the steadfast refusal of the Black leadership to contemplate "compromise" solutions that has brought about this situation.

But the Jews of Israel are not ready for such an admission. Indeed, the Israelis are still attempting to "create more facts" increasing their power vis-a-vis the Palestinians. And they are at the same time still working day and night to maintain tensions and divisions within the

ter such a long struggle, not only the partition approach, but a partition that is grossly unfair to the Palestinians using any historic standard of measurement.

There is a fourth factor, and this is the only one that was foreseeable all along. It is the slow building of Arab military power. And this factor may yet prove to be the most significant of all for as the potential level of destruction escalates, the big powers, most especially the dominant US may find they cannot risk allowing a situation of no-war, no-peace to continue.

So we have a situation in which some historic factors, the last two I've just discussed, are slowly buttressing the Palestinian cause? while other major new factors, the first two discussed above, are working against.

No doubt the collapse of the communist regimes in Eastern Europe means that the Palestinian cause has suffered a considerable diplomatic blow. It need not have been so, but the way the PLO conducted its diplomacy over the years made

By Steve Coll

SIX months after he was swept into office on a pledge to restore honesty and democratic values to Indian politics, Prime Minister V.P. Singh returned to his rural home region to confront the brutal, undemocratic realities of India's caste system and calm a brewing political storm.

Last month, a landlord in Singh's parched north Indian voting district and a member of the Prime Minister's princely caste, allegedly burned to death one of his field workers, a lowly "untouchable", because the man refused to turn over his new bride to his boss — a common practice in Fatehpur, still a largely feudal region.

The case became a political sensation because the landlord reportedly had campaigned for Singh in the election race, and the Prime Minister spent part of last week hopping by helicopter from village to dusty village, promising to uphold the rights of the long-reviled untouchables — known here formally as the scheduled caste — and assuring crowds that wrongdoers in the case would be severely punished.

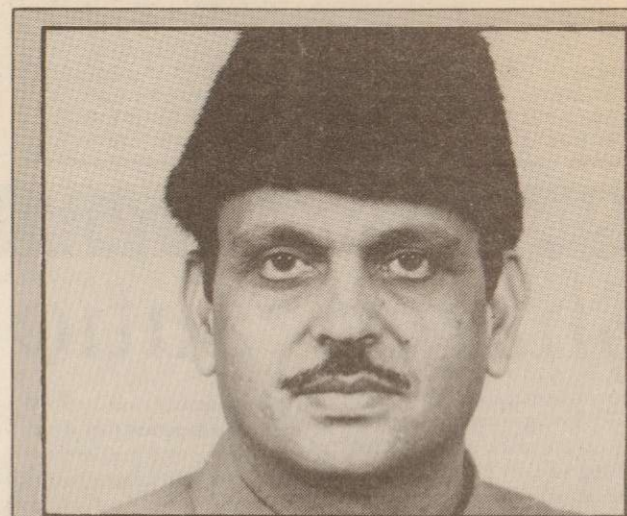
The trip was a microcosm of Singh's struggle to govern this vast and fractious country of 820 million people and to fulfil the promises that inspired voters last year to throw out former Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi, whose family has governed India for nearly all of its 43 years of independence.

Although Singh had vowed to implement bold political changes, he appears stymied after a half-year in office by some of this country's most ancient problems — caste warfare, factionalism, separatism and unstable relations with neighbouring countries — and widespread popular optimism that buoyed his year-long campaign and first weeks at the helm has faded.

Enormous crowds cheered candidate Singh in Fatehpur last November. A month later, they thronged the streets in troubled Punjab state to the north, where he made two historic trips to pray at the Sikh Golden Temple, promising to heal ethnic and religious wounds of years past.

But only sparse crowds greeted Singh when he returned to Punjab last month, shortly before he announced that elections in the state would have to be postponed again because of

Problems as old as India threaten Singh



V.P. Singh

Enormous crowds cheered candidate Singh in Fatehpur last November. But last week, most streets there were near empty as his motorcade criss-crossed the city. Editorials about Singh's leadership in the Indian press are frequent references to 'the vision thing' amid repeated complaints that Singh is overly cautious, muddled and afraid to assert bold leadership.

continuing separatist violence. And last week, most streets in Fatehpur were near empty as his motorcade criss-crossed the city.

Similarly, the unexpected unity within Singh's minority National Front coalition that helped him at the polls last fall has been replaced by factional bickering. Singh's Deputy Prime Minister has been snared in a vote-rigging scandal and has threatened to resign. The leader of another National Front faction has complained that Singh's administration tapped his telephone.

The most serious setback has come in foreign affairs, in which Singh promised new initiatives to improve relations with India's neighbours. But while Singh's government has fulfilled a pledge by the previous administration to withdraw Indian troops from Sri Lanka, it has also presided over a sharp deterioration in ties with Pakistan because of a

flare-up in the decade-old dispute over the northern region of Kashmir.

The debate now emerging focuses on whether Singh's early troubles — the perception that he is "hurrying slowly," as an adviser put it — are mainly due to unexpected problems beyond the Prime Minister's control or whether they reflect confusion and timidity on his part.

Editorials about Singh's leadership in the Indian press are beginning to sound like some written in the US about President Bush's first months in office. There are frequent references to "the vision thing" amid repeated complaints that Singh is overly cautious, muddled and afraid to assert bold leadership.

Singh appears to be growing tired of these complaints. "My stands have been very crisp," he said, bristling during a brief interview last week. "There is no confusion. It's a very decisive

leadership."

Singh said the factionalism in his National Front government, which is propped up by Hindu conservatives on the right and communists on the left, was a reflection of political realities he could not change, as well as his own attempt to allow full debate in his party and cabinet after years of tight control by the Gandhi dynasty. "The ruling elite in India has always curbed democracy in the name of unity," he said. "Many of the tombstones of the world's democracies bear the word 'unity'."

The enduring problem of caste warfare and discrimination, even in his own district, is a problem found "all over the country," he said. "Everywhere, upper castes have a hand over the lower caste. But ours is a clear policy. We stand for the rights of the scheduled castes."

Singh said his government had moved faster than any previous one in presenting a legislative agenda to parliament — including bills that would allow greater access to government documents, make the government media more autonomous and forgive small loans to many farmers. He added that he expected many of the measures to become law this year.

Some analysts say Singh's self-effacing style is precisely what the country needs after years of dynastic rule. "He does not believe the leader runs the country," said Pran Chopra, a political scientist at New Delhi's centre for Policy Studies. "He is trying to rebuild institutions, such as the judiciary. He is very much against excessive projection of himself during that process."

Singh said he was neither disappointed by the change in popular mood from his heady campaigning days six months ago nor worried about various troubles that have beset his young and politically fragile government.

"If everything is smooth, there is no challenge to the politician within you," he said. "I don't have high blood pressure, and I sleep well. — LAT-WP

Eastern Europe quickly toppled, one after the other, once the boot of Soviet military coercion was lifted. And since the PLO had firmly established itself precisely with those regimes—rather than ingratiating the Palestinian cause with the people

sum the very in of the PNC at the table with President de Klerk must be unnerving to many Israelis. And yet the South Africa analogy is flawed. There, in South Africa, the ANC, while eager for negotiations, remains rock firm to its basic principles—negotiations with

And finally, whereas in South Africa the parties are moving towards a single-country solution based on the principles of Western-style secular democracy; in the Mid-east the PLO has given up precisely this model and has now legitimised, af-

it so. And thus today, even as the Intifada rages, the new governments in these countries seem in a race to establish contact and working relations with Israel. But most significant of all is the issue of Soviet Jewry; for here lies the potential for a major strengthening, even a major transformation, of Israel over the next two to three years.

And with such potential ahead the Israelis are encouraged once again not to move towards a political settlement but rather to somehow play for more time—more time to further strengthen Israel within the territories it currently controls; more time for more unforeseen developments to occur; and most of all more time to crush the Intifada and further demoralise and divide the Palestinians.

When Yasser Arafat and the PNC moved as they did in the past few years it was with the understanding that the political situation was fast ripening; that a diplomatic initiative was likely to bear edible fruit; that playing the long-held "recognition" card meant a major breakthrough was immediately ahead.

That situation is now altered. The ripening process has been halted, if not reversed. Palestinian diplomacy was unable to turn its many concessions into swift and tangible progress. The anticipated big breakthrough has turned out to be marginal and tortured small steps.

A few years back when the Palestinian diplomatic offensive was conceived, a major alteration in the very nature of the Israeli-Palestinian quagmire looked possible. Now it appears that the basics of that conflict remain; that the Israelis have managed to withstand the diplomatic offensive and are even begging to push it back.

As for the future, both peace and war are serious options at this point. Both diplomatic progress and stalemate are real possibilities. History itself may be at something of a crossroads and dependent on the future course the Israeli-Palestinian conflict will take. But that course, and consequently history itself, is presently extremely unstable.

The children of Palestine

They endure degradation

Fight for next generation

By Joan Jackson

PALESTINE is burning with anger, rage, frustration, indignation, fear, fever, tears, bombs, gunfire, tyres, barricades, houses, stoves, children, etc.!

The parents suffer from the burning anger and frustration and fear that they have for their children because they have no way to protect them from the atrocities committed against the children by the Zionists who occupy their land.

The children who burn the tyres and throw the stones are also burning with rage and frustration. They know that with each peaceful protest or demonstration they will encounter the torturous retribution of the Zionists.

The struggle of the Intifada by the children and young men and women is constantly being bombarded with lethal weapons by the Zionists with a blatant disregard of the age of the Palestinians involved. The word "humane" does not exist in the Hebrew language when it concerns the Palestinians!

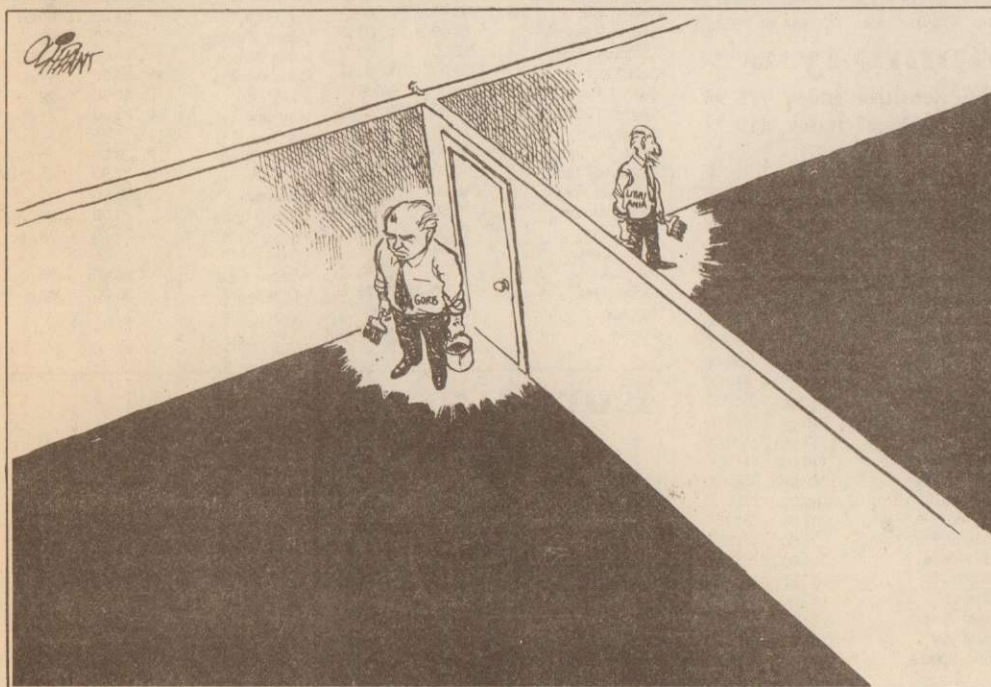
The Defence Minister, Yitzhak Rabin,

had mercilessly ordered the death and wounding of the Palestinian children. He also told the Knesset that "the first priority is to use force, might, beatings" on these children.

What gives the Israelis the right to occupy Palestine and put these children and their parents through the infamous degradation they are forced to endure?

Yes, Palestine is burning with all the abovementioned and it is also burning with the desire to again be its own nation with the freedom to live safe, normal lives. This generation of children is fighting for the next generation of children. They are striving to put out the fires which are killing their beloved homeland.

May God in His mercy bless and help these children who are courageously trying with all of their indomitable strength to put a stop to the Zionist movement which is even taking control of parts of nations other than Palestine. The burden rests heavily on the shoulders of the Children of Palestine but they stand up well and we who love Palestine are proud of these children.



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