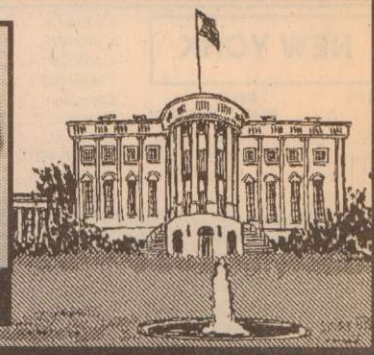


In this continuing discussion -- which took place in Jerusalem in the days immediately preceding the Madrid conference, Professor Riad Malki explained how he expects to prevent any Palestinian acceptance of any agreement less than one providing for Palestinian statehood. Today, in the conclusion to this extended discussion, I press Dr Malki to come forward with his expectations, and his desires.

From



Mark A. Bruzonsky



Washington

# CHANGES AND CHECKS

□ But don't you think the Americans and the Israelis know very well that it's likely the Palestinian delegation, even if the individuals want to, will not be able to sign the death certificate? Don't you think they already know that, but that they only want them there? It seems to me that they know very well what's possible and what's not -- but that the major goal was to get them there in the first place and then just to keep them there through one promise after another, one slogan after another, one delay after another. You really think they need them there to sign something, that its not enough just to have them there?

● (Our goal) is not only just to delay things. We have already started speaking to people who are going to be in the delegation and have reached certain agreements. You see, I'm not talking in vague or abstract ways, I'm talking about something complete.... We have started our fight...

□ What agreements?

● Of course this is something that I... These people will discuss everything but will come back to the people and tell them exactly what's happening.

□ But this group of people has never done that.

● This one will do that because there is vital pressure.

□ Hussein has been sitting in his home, Mr Wilcox of the American consulate writing his documents, for more than a year now. Isn't this the reality?

● Absolutely. Faisal Husseini was doing this, you know, because he thought that he's Arafat of the occupied territories and so Wilcox was coming to him. That is misunderstanding on Faisal's part. And he was really criticised many times.... But what has happened is that at least we have guarantees that the people who will attend will be sending reports on political developments and will be speaking directly through themselves or through others to the Palestinian people about what's happening there so we will make sure that the people in the occupied territories and the Diaspora will know exactly what was offered to the Palestinians and what kind of decision the Palestinians are going to take.

□ But you didn't answer my question. My question is, don't you think the Americans and the Israelis know that what is said in public in front of this delegation is not so important and the delegation may very well not sign anything and that you may very well influence the delegation. But the important thing is that they're there. The important thing is that they're photographed. The important thing is that the world press comes and shows that the Palestinians have accepted this arrangement. That's all they want.

Don't the Americans really want the Palestinians as a cover for the meeting itself and possible agreements with the Arabs?

● Yes ... exactly.... So the Palestinians are being used ... in this conference.

□ Without even being called a Palestinian delegation, they're called Jordanian-Palestinian. OK, so how can you be so optimistic? If you've been taken by this trap, how do you avoid the next one?

● No, no, I'm optimistic in the sense that if you know that, if you yourself as an American describes the situation the exact way that it is, then it's easy for the Arabs, for the Palestinians to see the way that it is. From now on then we can expect certain moves from the Palestinian people towards this situation.

□ Don't give me the specifics, but in general what are these moves that everybody talks about but which never seem to happen?

● I don't have in my pocket, you know, magical moves that...

□ You just did a test case. You had a quarter million people sign a statement that you took apparently to the PNC meeting. I don't think anybody's heard of this. Was it published in even in any of your papers in Arabic here?

● Yes, yes, it was published.

□ But where was it published in the Western press?

● I don't think. Maybe it's part of our own mistake and we take responsibility for that. I believe that what we should have done in the first place was to call a press conference and publicise the issue before sending it to Algiers. So we are learning from our mistakes, and that's why we believe that the way we are going to tackle the issue right

now is going to be different from the way that we tackled the issue during the PNC meetings.

□ But your enemy has also got you to the point where you're spending most of your time fighting each other. Isn't this ironic? Almost amazing. Who is it, in this discussion, you are primarily against? Yasser Arafat and Faisal Husseini!

● I want to make it easy at the end, and I will say this: at least we have a historical responsibility to our own people, to our own beliefs, to our own principles, and to our own just cause. We did our utmost to prevent the conference; we couldn't do it. Now we will -- we will do our utmost to stick to our principles, and to fight the people who will try to sell out these principles....

□ And when I ask you if you have another peace bus, you say, no, you really don't have another bus.

● But there is another bus. I just told you about that. I told you there is...

□ Oh you want to back to the old bus.

● To the "International Legitimacy" bus. I told you.

□ It's still there?

● The International Legitimacy -- of course! Imagine if this conference really fails -- it is a conference not based on international legitimacy, not under the auspices of the United Nations, then what's the options? I've met people from the French Foreign Office and they have told me very clearly that in case the American initiative really fails, the conference itself, then the Europeans, or not necessarily all Europeans but indeed the French, feel a responsibility that they have to bring forward another initiative.

□ The Americans won't let it fail; not for many years.

● We'll see.

□ It would be unreasonable politically for the Americans to let it fail. They will drag it out at a minimum.

● No. According to the letters of assurances that are given to the Palestinians, and to the others, there are time limits to each stage. According to what I have learned, hearing about the Palestinian letter of assurance which is not publicised yet, it says that after a few weeks from the opening they will start the negotiations.

□ Bilateral negotiations?

● Yes, yes. And the timing will last for one year. It's very specific. One year for negotiations, in order to reach....

□ Conveniently right through the next, through the American elections.

● Yes. To reach the autonomy stage. Then, they will enter the stage of autonomy or what they called it -- self-government interim period. Then they will start in and the third year of this interim period of self-rule a new stage of negotiations in order to reach agreement about the final settlement. So it should last for five years. So the fifth year, when the autonomy stage ends, the discussions about the final agreement also ends.

I'm not really trying to defend....

□ You really think these time limits mean anything?

● No. But at least, you know, when you mentioned how they are going to drag things on for years. At least you know they gave these time limits. I'm not really defending these time limits; I don't expect the Americans to stick to them, or the Israelis to stick to the time limits. I'm hoping that the conference itself will collapse. And because I know at least that out of these 14 Palestinians who will attend, at least one of them will say publicly, he represents the PLO. He will say public-

ly...

□ Somehow underneath all this there doesn't it seem possible to you that the Americans and the Israelis are really working more closely than the press reports would indicate. This is a good conference for both of them, whatever Shamir says in public.

● Yes.

□ Shamir's not going to leave. This is what he wants! You can get up and you can say whatever you want.... From my perspective, where I live in Washington this president is much more astute than Jimmy Carter, this president has much more invested even than Jimmy Carter, because he has promises to Syria. He's not going to let this conference collapse; he wants it to convene, and after two days, the formal sessions are over, and all the speeches are made. After that it looks to me like the bus is going to have its doors locked for many years to come. Don't you agree? Isn't this what they are planning?

● I really can't predict what will happen; I don't know exactly what the Americans will do. I don't know exactly how things will develop in Israel; I don't know exactly how things will develop on the Palestinian side or on the Arab side. I don't know if the Arabs will continue there; we might see maybe (something happens) somewhere, that might alter whole plan that the Americans are trying to establish for the Mid-east.

□ Ah, now we get to your real hopes I think, that something is going to change along the way.

● That's true. Why not? Yes. Of course, of course. This is part of what we would like to see happen.

Concluded